UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

A GROUNDED THEORY INVESTIGATION OF JOURNAL WRITING

BY

JUDY CHEW

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IN

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Although the practice of journal writing has existed for centuries, it is a little understood and highly understudied area in the psychological literature. Attempts have been made to describe the benefits and drawbacks of this practice and to highlight the factors involved when an individual begins and maintains a journal. However, these efforts have been philosophical, anecdotal or testimonial. The present study is based on the grounded theory method. This is a discovery model of research which aims to generate theory that is grounded in data. To accomplish this goal, there is an exploration for processes. More specifically, there is a search for a basic social psychological process (BSPP) that accounts for all or most of the variation observed in the individuals involved in the particular phenomenon under study. Unstructured interviews were conducted with six individuals who had been journal writers for a minimum of one year. Recreating Self was the basic social psychological process found. This is a process whereby the journal writer resolves the basic problem of dissatisfaction with self by initiating changes in his or her behaviors, attitudes, and/or circumstances. The process consists of four stages: (a) Focusing on Self, (b) Exploring Options, (c) Composting, and (d) Maintaining Self. This model conceptualizes the cumulative and recursive process involved in the journal writer's cultivation of experiences and participation in self-development.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

And ever, as the story drained
The wells of fancy dry,
And faintly strove that weary one
To put the subject by,
"The rest next time-" "It is next time!"
The happy voices cry.

Thus grew the tale of Wonderland:
Thus slowly, one by one,
Its quaint events were hammered out-
And now the tale is done,
And home we steer, a merry crew,
Beneath the setting sun.

In Alice's Adventures In Wonderland
by Lewis Carroll

The completion of this work involved time and devotion from many people. I would like to express my thanks to John who has encouraged me along the way and waited patiently, in anticipation of the Day of Celebration. To the men and women who participated in the study and enabled me to immerse myself in understanding the journal writing process, thank you for making this study a meaningful and exciting one.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	7
	A Historical Context	8
	Definitions	11
	Theoretical and Descriptive Literature	14
	Contributions From Nonempirical Research	27
	Contributions From Empirical Research	28
3.	THE METHOD	34
	Introduction to the Method	36
	Criteria for Grounded Theory	38
	Theoretical Context	39
	The Uses of Grounded Theory	41
	Description of the Method and Its Concepts	42
	Process Theory	43
	The Research Process	45
	The Collection of Data	46
	The Comparison of Data	47
	Theoretical Relevance	50
	The Integration of Categories	51
	Memoing	53
	Reliability and Validity	54
	Credibility	55
	Transferability	56
	Consistency	57

CHAPTER PAGE

Confirmability 58

Strengths of the Grounded Theory Approach 59

Procedures 60

The Selection of the Informants 60

Selection Criteria 61

The Participants 63

Data Collection 63

The Interview 63

Scripting 65

Categorization 68

Ensuring Reliability and Validity 72

Credibility 72

Transferability 74

Dependability 75

Confirmability 76

Ethical Considerations 77

4. THE ANALYSIS PROCESS 79

Analysis of the Transcripts 79

Stage One: Focusing on Self 84

Contexts 85

Personal/Intrapersonal 85

Change/Transitions 86

Adulthood 87

Conditions 89

Experiencing Rejection 89

CHAPTER PAGE

Experiencing Loneliness 92

Experiencing Confusion 93

Experiencing Anger 94

Experiencing Anxiety 94

Experiencing Isolation 95

Strategy 98

Turning To Self 98

Consequences 99

Wanting 100

Fearing 102

Reserving 104

Focusing on Self 107

Stage Two: Exploring Options 108

Conditions 109

Appraising/Evaluating Self 109

Wanting 114

Wanting Privacy 115

Mistrusting 117

Fearing 118

Wanting To Remember 118

Being Curious 120

Strategies 121

Turning To Self 121

Covering Up 124

Consequences 127

CHAPTER PAGE

Getting Going 127

Modifying 130

Stage Three

Composting: The Cultivation of Experience 132

Conditions 137

Getting Going 137

Wanting Change 138

Autonomy In Self-Expression 138

Opening The Self 140

Context 141

Being In Solitude 141

Strategies 144

Shifting Time 144

Creative Self-Expression 147

Reviewing Journal 149

Consequences 151

Befriending Journal 153

Finding A Resort 155

Balancing 156

Gaining Perspective 158

Accounting For Personal Changes 159

Stage Four: Maintaining Self 161

Condition 165

Expanding Self 166

CHAPTER PAGE

Strategies 168

Creative Self-Expression 168

Accommodating Other Options 169

Context 171

Interpersonal 171

Continuity 172

Consequences 174

Consolidating A Sense Of Self 174

Outgrowing The Need 175

Being An Exemplar 176

Summary of Theory 179

The Stages of Journal Writing 182

The Cultivation of Experience 183

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS 185

Introduction 185

The Research Question 185

The Evolving Research Question 186

The Participants' Part 187

The Findings 189

Experiential Learning 189

A Stage Theory of Journal Writing 194

Recreating Self 197

Role of Creativity 199

The Role of Self-Actualization 201

The Counselling Process 204

CHAPTER PAGE

Threats To Credibility 208

Subjectivity 208

Verbal Reports As Data 210

Generalizability 211

Theoretical Generalizability 212

Delimitations 213

Criteria For Evaluating A Substantive Theory 213

Fit 213

Work 214

Relevance 214

Modifiability 215

Implications For Counselling 215

Suggestions For Future Research 219

Conclusion 219

Epilogue 220

References 225

Appendix A 241

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE PAGE

1. Recreating Self Through Journal Writing 184

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Personal journal writing, whether it is structured or unstructured, is a means of self-examination, and in that sense, is psychological in nature. The journal is regarded as a book of recordings that capture important dates, events, experiences, and emotions. The details of these recordings can be referred to months and years later. On another level, the journal offers a means for problem-solving, sorting out conflicting or confusing emotions, exploring hopes and dreams, and dealing with realities. Journal writing is a means by which the journal keeper makes sense of and assigns meaning to life. To be a journal writer is to be a sojourner of the past, present, and future. There is a quest, a search for meaning and understanding through the exploration and development of self.

The practice of journal writing throughout the centuries has resulted in renown works by Augustine, Anne Frank, C. S. Lewis, Virginia Woolf, Dag Hammarskjold, May Sarton, and Anais Nin. Journal writing at present appears to have encountered a renaissance of sorts. The use of the journal has become more widespread in the twentieth century with the recognition and popularization by modern psychology of certain psychological insights and concepts of personal responsibility (Rainer, 1978).

Traditionally, research in the area of journal writing has focused upon specific problems such as test anxiety (Levi, 1985) or specific contexts such as public schools (Brand, 1978), or specific populations such as college students enrolled in a psychology course (Baron, 1978). Undoubtedly, previous research studies have broadened the scope of understanding of what journal writing involves to some extent but many questions remain unanswered. There has been a proliferation of how-to-journal books that encourage the use of journal writing for personal development and growth (Baldwin, 1977a; Capacchione, 1979; Rainer, 1978; Simons, 1973). However, the literature that promotes the use of journal writing is mainly philosophical, anecdotal, and testimonial in nature.

Counsellors and psychologists need to have a clearer picture of the processes involved when an individual begins a journal and what happens over time with respect to journal writing itself. Lacking this knowledge, the use of journal writing as a part of treatment or as an activity that is independent of a therapeutic context remains unclear. Also unanswered are such questions as how, when and why an individual could benefit from journal writing and under what circumstances it would be worthwhile to consider alternatives. There is little in the research literature pertaining to the usefulness and effectiveness of journal writing. Little research has been conducted to

examine the psychological processes involved in journal writing. Clearly, the testimonial and philosophical biases that are overwhelmingly in favor of journal writing are insufficient in providing an understanding of what is happening in the journal writing process.

My interest in journal writing stems primarily from working in counselling contexts. While I have not instructed clients in detail about how to make use of journal writing as a means of self-expression, I have been interested in exploring this area further in terms of what contribution journal writing might make for individuals in that context. In my counselling experience, clients have commented that they had been keeping a journal prior to or during their counselling experience. On other occasions, I have been asked by clients if keeping a journal of their counselling sessions might be useful. As a counsellor, I have made the suggestion to some clients to begin writing down their observations of their emotions or thoughts as a way of helping them capture a sense of what they were experiencing between sessions.

In my own reflections on journal writing, I realized that the client and I both assumed that journal writing was basically a good thing. The pragmatic attitude was one of trial and error--"if it works, use it" and "if it doesn't, don't use it". Little time was actually spent in exploring what the individual encountered in journal writing

regardless of whether the process was continued or not. Furthermore, even though I had personally engaged in journal writing to some extent, I had really not examined what the journal writing process entailed for me. My research interest in journal writing therefore was borne out of unanswered questions from a professional and personal standpoint.

The kinds of questions that remain unanswered are: Is journal writing simply a way of recording events, problems or disturbing emotions? What factors are involved when an individual begins a journal? What factors contribute to the maintenance of a journal, however regular? In what ways might journal writing be helpful before, during, and after counselling? Can journal writing itself become a problem? What are the disadvantages and potential dangers of journal writing? What role can the counsellor play in the use of journal writing in the therapeutic setting? Can journal writing fulfill some of the functions that a counsellor serves? Such questions are in need of answers particularly with the present day emphasis on the appropriate use of mental health services, the importance of the role of the individual in taking preventative measures, and the need for the counsellor to demonstrate accountability to self, client, and the profession.

The significance of this study is related to its method of research, grounded theory, which seeks to generate a

theoretical framework from the data to account for processes. In particular, the grounded theory method entails a search for a basic social psychological process (BSPP) that explains problematic behavior and its variations. The aim of this study, then, is to establish a theoretical framework which explains the process which individuals engage in with respect to journal writing. A generated theory of this nature would have general relevance to all individuals involved in personal journal writing, and be of direct use to helping professionals.

A review of the literature will be provided in Chapter Two. This chapter briefly outlines the historical context of journal writing and distinguishes between diary, journal, biography, and, autobiography. The state-of-the-art of journal writing will be outlined with an overview on some of the findings, concluding that little research has addressed the psychological processes involved in journal writing. In Chapter Three, a general description of the grounded theory method will be given and how the method will be implemented. Each stage is explained in terms of the relevant conditions, contexts, strategies, and consequences that pertain to it. The theory will be discussed in terms of its relationship to the existing literature and other research areas. Chapter Four outlines the analysis process and the relationship of the research data to the development of the theory. In

Chapter Five the significance of the theory and suggestions for future research are addressed. This will be followed by the conclusion and epilogue in which the researcher comments on how the research study effected her.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In a grounded theory research study the literature review serves a different purpose from that of hypotheses-testing research. This approach is designed to generate theory; not to test it (May, 1986). The main purpose of the literature review is to enable the reader to view the phenomenon as the researcher did at the initial part of the research project. Thus in keeping with the grounded theory approach, the pertinent literature in the area of journal writing is presented.

It is important to note that conducting research within the framework of the grounded theory method involves a preliminary search of the literature with the purpose of setting a context for the research study. In so doing, the issues and gaps in the research are identified and presented as possible areas of further exploration. Once a "discovered framework" has been established in the study, the theoretical literature then serves the purpose of providing a theoretical sampling source to confirm and enhance the developing theory. In keeping with the grounded theory method, this review is not intended to be exhaustive nor does it dictate the focus of the research, or provide a critical evaluation. Instead, this review is aimed at showing some of the gaps and the inconclusive nature of the research literature on the given subject.

Furthermore, the importance of timing in the sampling of the theory needs to be underscored to ensure that the researcher's distraction from her own study focus will be minimized. Glaser (1978), reminding the researcher of the caution that is to be taken, comments:

> This general warning against sampling outside the substantive area before an emergent framework is established cannot be heeded too closely and carefully. Besides undermining the relevance of the substantive area, the literature's focus frequently becomes a "pet" interest of the analyst because of its respected author. (p. 51)

Before a review of the literature is presented, a brief outline of the use of journal writing within a historical context will be presented. The distinctions between diary, autobiography, and journal will also be made.

A Historical Context

The growth and development of interest in the psychological aspects and psychotherapeutic application of writing in general, and journal writing specifically, have been documented in Baron's (1978) dissertation. Baron provides a very comprehensive review of the historical roots of journal writing which covers the period from the 1900's to the 1970's.

From a general perspective, written communication developed early in human history, beginning no later than with the earliest known cave drawings, or in the case with preliterate or illiterate people in the carefully preserved stories handed on, at times verbatim, from one generation

to the next (Simons, 1978). The uses of writing for psychological health and fulfillment may be traced to ancient Greece where poetry was first recognized for its healing powers (Brand, 1979). The Greek philosopher Gorgias drew a parallel between the effects of poetry on the soul to the expulsion of evil humours from the body, and emphasized the specific healing value of poetic language (Brand, 1979).

The origin of journal writing is not certain although authors (Baron, 1978, Simons, 1978) have pointed to biblical references such as Numbers 33:2 in which Moses is commanded to keep a written account of his spiritual progress. According to Simons (1978) the journals kept by the early tribes were an integral part of their travelling history. These journals provided a way for the individual and the community as a whole to reintegrate deed and discovery. McMurrary (1980) noted that deerskin, walls of teppees, the Bayeaux tapestry, pottery, and so on were the sources for these journal writings that portrayed the tribal elders' meetings and their decisions as to which events of the season should be recorded in paintings.

Personal journal writing has also been traced to Japan in the tenth century where it is noted that women had no other way to express what they felt than by writing journals. The journals were kept inside pillows and that is how these written expressions became known as "pillow

books" (Nin, 1975, P. 151). To these Japanese women, the journal served as a form of personal expression in which external realities, subjective fantasies, and fiction were explored (Nin, 1975). These journals were regarded as both literary and introspective and were based on the writer's inner time frame rather than on a calendar.

Journal writing has also been associated with religious and cultural traditions. Many Quakers and Calvinists in seventeenth-century England kept spiritual journals. It was during this century that journal writing became a fairly widespread practice. The keeping of journals has been a time honored practice in various religious traditions. From the Confessions of St. Augustine to the spiritual journals of the Society of Friends, the journal has represented an important means for the expression of spirituality. It was not until the seventeenth century that journal writing became a popular, widespread practice. The Quakers, for example, developed the journal into devotional literature to be shared among themselves as a means of spreading their religious beliefs (McMurray, 1980). For the Puritans, journal keeping was a tool for self-discipline and self-judgment. Puritan ministers living in the New World after arriving on the Mayflower taught children to use the journal as a way of keeping tabs on their conscience (Rainer, 1978).

There is evidence to suggest that the practice of

journal writing was found among Reformed clergymen in the late sixteenth century. To these individuals the journal became an instrument where their consciences were examined and where they prepared themselves for encounters with God (Mallon, 1984). The reasons and inclinations that drew the individuals to write in a journal throughout the centuries are captured in the following statement:

> ..we are dealing with an inclination which seems to go back to the dawn of consciousness and pertain to its essence- humanity's desire to contemplate or hand on in some fashion the important events, deeds, fantasies, dreams and hopes of people and therefore the need to record them (Simons, 1978, p.8).

Personal journal writing has proliferated into such fields as education, literature, psychiatry, psychology, and religion. An extensive review of the use of journal writing in other disciplines has been presented by Fulwiler (1987).

Definitions

Journal. The word "journal" comes from the word "diurnal", and the Latin root "dies" which means "day" (Berger and Berger, 1957). A journal is a private book of dated entries kept by an individual over a period of time. Included in these entries are thoughts, reactions, and emotions about oneself, others, events or ideas. Generally, the word "journal" is looser in definition than "diary" and allows for a wider range of creative expression in terms of form and content (Baldwin, 1977a). Dreams,

fantasies, sketches, quotations, and poems are some examples. The journal is "a connection of the self with the self" (Baldwin, 1977a, p. xiv). The personal journal serves as an instrument for personal growth and is a "tool for recording the process of our lives" (Baldwin, 1977a, p. 2). Although Rainer (1978) does not make a clear distinction between "journal" and "diary", she qualifies the meaning of journal writing. She asserts that the new conception of journal writing has little to do with the rigid, daily calendar diary sometimes kept by children, nor is it a record of factual material, such as trips taken.

Progoff (1975) developed guidelines for journal writing to counteract some of the limitations and negative effects that he perceived to be inherent in spontaneous journal keeping. He also provided a description of journal writing with directions that are consistent with others in the field. The intention of Progoff's (1975) structured journal, or psychological workbook is to provide a way to "reflect and carry forward the process of growth as it was taking place uniquely in each individual" (Progoff, 1975, p. 30).

Diary. Interestingly, the word "diary" shares the same Latin root from "diarium" from "dies" as the word "journal" (Berger and Berger, 1957). Traditionally, diary keeping suggests a more formal pattern of daily entries, providing primarily a place for recording the writer's experiences,

observations, and activities (Baldwin, 1977a).

Autobiography. The original Greek words "bios" and "autos" mean life and self, respectively (Gunn, 1982). The self who reads, whether it be the autobiographer or the reader of the autobiography, is the displayed self rather than the hidden self (Gunn, 1982). The following comment elaborates on this statement:

> It is by means of language (graphie) that self both displays itself and has access to depth; it is also through language that self achieves and acknowledges its bios (Gunn, 1982, p.9).

Essentially, an autobiography is a narration of one's own history, memoir, or recollections of fixed events which have surrounded and absorbed one's thoughts (Clark, 1935). Latta (1988) notes that the autobiography is the discovery of self in retrospect but adds that it focuses more on the major people and events which influenced the person's life and less on the individual's search for identity. Autobiography, in this sense, is not a mere recapitulation of the past. It also reflects the individual's attempt at self-representation within an historical context. The work of autobiography stands "as the writer's bid for a place in the world" (Wolff, 1979, p. 71).

Some researchers and writers in the field do not distinguish between the terms "diary" and "journal" (Baron, 1978; Berger and Berger, 1957; Baker, 1988; Nichols, 1973; Rainer, 1978; and Winslow, 1980). In this study the term

"journal", rather than "diary" will be used in order to preserve the distinction between objective and subjective types of documents and in acknowledgment of the psychological aspects of maintaining a journal. This distinction, as outlined earlier in this chapter, is consistent with the views reflected by Baldwin (1977a), Progoff (1975) and Simons (1975).

THEORETICAL, PHILOSOPHICAL, and DESCRIPTIVE LITERATURE

Morita Shoma. One of the first suggestions for using journals in a psychotherapeutic context was made by a Japanese philosopher-psychiatrist Morita Shoma, in the early 1900's (Reynolds, 1980). Developed in the Far East, Morita Therapy incorporates journal writing as an important vehicle of interaction between the patient's world and the therapist's thinking. The journal is viewed as an effective tool in the treatment of "shinkeishitsu" which is the Japanese term for such neuroses as anxiety, phobias, and certain psychosomatic and obsessive-compulsiveness disorders (Chang, 1974, p. 208).

With the goal of reeducation, Morita Therapy provides a means for documenting psychological development, helping the individual to develop new perspectives on life and the world, and noting basic changes in personality structure that occur. In keeping a journal, the patient reflects upon daily experiences. The doctor takes the journal each evening and returns it the next day, often with comments on

the previous day's entry (Smith, 1981, p. 62). The journal is used as a means for retraining attention. By being so immersed in a task at hand or in some simple pleasure the patient's symptoms are set aside. The therapist's position is that anxiety and feelings of inferiority are not overcome by paying attention to the problems but by attending to work because it is socially useful rather than because it is therapeutic (Smith, 1981).

C. Jung. One of the central concepts in Jung's theory is the process of individuation which refers to the "differentiation of the various parts of the personality", and becoming aware of the previously hidden components so that these components can be synthesized (Herganhahn, 1984, p. 54). This synthesis leads toward the realization of the self, which is a lifelong and difficult task, and unlikely to be achieved fully by anyone. According to Jung, reaching a state of self-realization is dependent upon the cooperation of the ego and its recognition of the messages from the unconscious levels of personality. Otherwise, full individuation is not possible. Thus, in order for the individuation of the personality to take effect, everything must become conscious (Hall & Nordby, 1973). It is within this context that personal journal writing has particular relevance. Jung's work with the unconscious was intimately linked to his own personal journal which he maintained throughout his adult life. In fact, he was one of the

first psychological theorists to use the journal to facilitate the self-realization process. For Jung, the personal journal served several important purposes. Paraphrasing McMurray's (1980) summary, these purposes are:

> (1) the journal provided a channel for discovering, recording and experiencing the process of individuation;
>
> (2) the journal was a place for self-confrontation in which the individual's struggle for self-knowledge as a part of the individuation process was accounted for;
>
> (3) Jung believed that whatever quality one could observe that is characteristic of an individual, it is very likely that the opposite could be found as well. The journal therefore provided a means for the awareness and acceptance of both these possibilities.

Jung recorded his dreams, fantasies of recurrent figures, images and symbols from his personal unconscious as well as his collective unconscious, the latter referring to that which is inborn, universal and "has contents and modes of behavior that are the same everywhere and in all individuals" (Jung, 1959, p. 3).

Roberto Assagioli. Assagioli is recognized for his development of psychosynthesis which examines human development on the basis of the discovery and expression of the self. One of the basic notions of this theory is "the unfolding I" (Assagioli, 1965). Also of fundamental

importance in the development of an inclusive concept of the human being is the idea of the "transpersonal" dimension of an individual's experience, or in other words, that which goes beyond the individual level. Assagioli also focused on the development of the personality. Psychosynthesis is moved beyond the psyche (personal self) to reintegrating released energies around a unifying center of awareness and will (transpersonal self) (Assagioli, 1965, 1973).

In terms of journal writing as an integral part of psychotherapy, he outlined the following benefits:

> (1) facilitates assessment;
> (2) provides a means of self-expression;
> (3) acts as a technique of active training in concentration, attention and will;
> (4) provide release to emotions in a therapeutic way;
> (5) provide a sense of satisfaction on a symbolic level as writing can be a symbolic act of retaliation (Assagioli, 1965, p. 70-71, 103-104).

In relation to therapy sessions, the benefits of journal writing include saving time as the therapist can read the entries quickly. Journal writing can also facilitate the client's openness, particularly when writing in the absence of the therapist. In advocating the use of journal writing, Assagioli states:

> ..to encourage him to show it to the therapist by pointing out to him the advantages we mentioned earlier: the saving of time in the sessions, and giving a more complete picture because he may otherwise forget relevant things that come to his mind between sessions. Furthermore, there is the fact that in writing one expresses different sides of the personality; some people are freer, less inhibited in writing than in speaking about delicate subjects (Assagioli, 1965, p. 104)

Leonard Pearson. In an attempt to broaden the spectrum of treatment techniques, various psychologists (Burton, 1965; Ellis, 1965; Harrower, 1965; and Raimy, 1965) under the leadership of Pearson published a monograph, The Use Of Written Communications in Psychotherapy, that discussed a range of topics related to written communication. Burton (1965) regarded written productions by the client as adjuncts to therapy. He cautions therapists against their own bias of rejecting written communications as this inevitably involves risking rejection of the client. The advantages of written communications are listed as follows:

> (1) The preparation of a "written production" ...by a client is an expressive and creative act. It both analyzes and synthesizes emotion in a deeply personal way and, as such, works counter to repressive and regressive forces in the personality.
>
> (2) The content of the "written productions" provides materials for analysis similar to dreams, fantasies, projective tests, and other imaginative productions.
>
> (3) "Written productions" can further interval-therapy by providing for rehearsal of therapeutic hours. In this way the development of insight and cognition is encouraged.
>
> (4) A "written production" usually has a wider social base than an individual therapy session. In this sense, it is more outer-directed for it involves family, peer groups, authority figures, etc., in greater quantities than in the sessions. Since society is the place where the client ultimately makes his life, written productions permit him a wider social integration of analytic material.
>
> (5) Under certain circumstances, the time required for treatment may be eclipsed by the judicious use of "written productions." (Burton 1965, p. 14-15).

Needless to say there are cautions and limitations with

regards to the use of written communication. The use of writing may also be viewed as potentially having a negative influence on treatment. Quoting again from Burton (1965), the disadvantages are listed as follows:

> (1) A "written production" displaces the emphasis from the interaction between the client and the therapist;
>
> (2) not all clients or therapists have the capacity or interest to use "written productions";
>
> (3) writing can serve as a buffer or defense from the honesty of direct confrontation;
>
> (4) having the client write down highly personal or private thoughts may create inhibition and reluctance;
>
> (5) "Written productions" are imaginal rather than actional. They focus on the interior of the person; but externalizing may often be the need at certain stages of treatment. In this sense, introspection rather than integrative action may be promoted. (p. 13-14)

From his own experience as a psychotherapist, Ellis (1965) states:

> ...that not as much material was covered during a therapeutic session as tended to be covered when the patient and I were speaking; and, secondly, the patients sometimes seemed a little more reluctant to bring out certain aspects of their lives, such as their sex feelings and actions, when they had to write them down on paper than when they could speak them into my ears. (p. 25)

Ira Progoff. After a close examination of the spontaneous use of private journals, Progoff (1975), a Jungian-trained therapist, provides several precautions. He noted that journals are often used in situations where attaining particular goals has been difficult. In this

sense, the journal becomes a "self-testing" device that reflects on the extent to which goals have been attained (Progoff, 1975, p. 24). However, for a judgmental individual, spontaneous journal writing can "increase whatever feelings of guilt the person had before he began to keep the journal" (Progoff, 1975, p. 24). Furthermore, the keeping of a journal sometimes works against itself and has a negative impact, particularly when it is kept "without the guidance of dynamic principles and without a protective discipline; or when, under the guise of communication, the keeping of a journal is used as a strategem or as a weapon in order to impress our point of view on someone else" (Progoff, 1975, p. 25). Thirdly, when people use private journals as a means of helping themselves reach a certain goal, the definitiveness of the goal actually restricts the space in which the inner process can move. Once the goal is accomplished or interest in it has ceased, the practice of journal writing also ceases. Misuse of the practice of journal keeping leads to disuse and this disuse "leaves a vacuum in the person's experience" (Progoff, 1975, p. 25).

As a response to these problems, Progoff developed the intensive journal method as a way to "unify the personality and effectively achieve a kind of self-therapy" (L. A. Times, October 19, 1975). Emphasis was placed on developing the psychological workbook in such a way that it

could be self-sustaining if the individual worked with it alone. Such a method was aimed at sustaining the individual in the "interim times between his contacts with his therapist, or with his group, or with whatever type of dialogue he was working" (Progoff, 1975, p. 28). The journal approach, as designed by Progoff was a way of enhancing self-development and inner awareness, and also eliminating the therapist's value system and bias (Rainer, 1978). Progoff (1975) comments on how journal writing can effect therapeutic change:

> by providing active techniques that enable an individual to draw upon his inherent resources for becoming a whole person. It systematically evokes and strengthens the inner capacities of persons by working from a nonmedical vantage point and proceeding without analytic or diagnostic categories (p. 9).

Christina Baldwin. In One To One: Self-Understanding Through Journal Writing, Baldwin, a freelance writer and counsellor, underscores the assumption that the individual is capable of having an internal relationship with one's self or one's own mind in the journal writing process. She contends that in observing and in letting the unconscious come into the consciousness, a birthing of ourselves is possible. The notion of birthing is drawn from the original meaning of "therapist" which implies:

> an attendant, or midwife, one who made way for Psyche's head. Therapy implies the stretching of one's limbs or consciousness, of opening oneself to the imagery and activity of labor, and the therapeutic journey becomes an act of birthing. (Baldwin, 1977a, p. 5)

Baldwin's book presents an overview of what journal

writing is, providing guidelines as to how one may attempt to keep a journal, and highlighting the many benefits that may be derived from this practice. Included are exercises to enhance one's writing such as focusing on dreams, issues pertaining to self-identity, problem-solving, friendship, sexuality, and death. In her view, journal writing does not protect the individual from ambivalence. It enables one to deal with it, thus heightening the potential for experiencing discomfort, fear, and anxiety. On the other hand, Baldwin attests to the potential for the journal writing process to map one's progress, to validate experience and to provide companionship for what is basically a solitary passage (Baldwin, 1977b).

Tristine Rainer. Rainer (1978) is a college teacher of creative writing and journal keeping. After eight years of researching both published and unpublished journals, Rainer emphasized the journal as a means to change self-evaluation, enhance self-awareness, enable problem-solving, clarify goals, and facilitate creative expression. The journal was defined as follows:

> (it is) a practical psychological tool that enables you to express feelings without inhibition, recognize and alter self-defeating habits of mind, and come to know and accept that self which is you. It is a sanctuary where all the disparate elements of life-feelings, thoughts, dreams, hopes, and fears; fantasies, practicalities, worries, facts, and intuitions-can merge to give you a sense of wholeness and coherence. It can help you understand your past, discover joy in the present, and create your own future. (Rainer, 1978, p. 18)

Rainer asserts that the individual's discovery of a personal style of journal keeping is a crucial aspect of the self-knowledge derived from the writing process. She disagrees with the Progoff method as she perceives that his structured method limits the freeing of expression that plays an important part in releasing the individual from the very problems that triggered a search for resolutions through journal writing in the first place (Baron, Personal Communication: February 21, 1978b).

Rolf von Eckartsberg. von Eckartsberg addresses the intimate link between stories and psychotherapy. The psychotherapeutic situation is one in which the therapist is helping individuals help themselves. In accomplishing this, the therapist works with the client in "storying the emotional plot-line that lies behind the words of the initial story" (von Eckartsberg, 1986, p. 210). The meta-story of the client's problematic life is drawn out through the therapist-client interaction. Specifically, the personal emotional drama, the emotions of hate, envy, jealousy, guilt, and anger, etc.-and in their interplay are unraveled. von Eckartsberg (1986) views therapy as:

> a dialogal struggle for life-formative storying, for finding the story-formulation of our personal existence with which we can identify wholeheartedly, for which we can stand up, and which gives us a solid and trusted basis for creative and responsible action. (p. 210)

Psychotherapy in this sense, involves the therapist's assistance in helping clients realize and acknowledge the

problematic stories they are stuck in, to liberate themselves from those stories that are unlivable and to enable them to weave a new context by re-storying a life that is livable and acceptable, with new possibilities for hope and discovery.

A second important aspect of von Eckartsberg's work is writing marathon therapy which attempts to assist clients in regaining a closer and more accepting contact with their "psychological feeling dynamic and its concomitant problems and self-defeating obstructions" (von Eckartsberg, 1986, p. 213). When compared with psychoanalytic free-association, the writing marathon process speeds up the work of self-disclosure. The process involves the client's revelation of the problematic areas, and the many and often contradictory emotions that result from the time pressure. Initially, negative stories of hate, fear, weakness or pain surface. Gradually during the course of writing, individuals write themselves free from these unlivable stories. Through re-storying, the initial self-storying that is negative and repetitive begins to recede. In their place are the re-storying of hope, affirmation and longing. One of the benefits of this form of therapy is the monitoring that the individual receives during the writing and the guidance by the therapists that is provided during blockages and difficulties. von Eckertsberg (1986) refers to the tangible and re-readable representation of

the person's psychological and existential situation as a "psychogram", an existential print-out and life-text that can in turn be developed and directed in the context of therapy to foster insight as well as behavioral change.

Michael White and David Epston. As co-authors of the book, Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends (1990), White and Epston introduce the assumption that problems are encountered by people when the invented stories of their lives (by self and others), are inadequate representations of their lived experience and that, in these circumstances, there will be significant aspects of their lived experiences that contradict these dominant narratives (p. 15). The use of narrative then becomes a crucial part of therapy as the therapeutic endeavor becomes a process of storying and re-storying the lives and experiences of these people (White and Epston, 1990).

The examination of the use of narrative means in therapy revolves around a crucial question: "How can we enable the writing of personal and collective stories that liberate and heal when the dominant stories are so problem-saturated?" (White and Epston, 1990, p. xi). From a therapeutic standpoint, alternative stories need to be self-generated stories that can incorporate aspects of the lived experience that were neglected. These alternative stories challenge the "truths" that specify their lives and are woven in with alternative knowledge. Although journal

writing per se is not addressed in this form of therapy, the authors do include therapy narrative forms such as letters, certificates, and documents as means by which the individual can redefine the relationship with the problem by externalizing, questioning, and gaining power/knowledge.

Other. The literature is abundant with discussions on the application of journal writing to a wide spectrum of specific problems. For example, journal writing seems to be a viable method to: relieve tension and to moderate periods of confusion and anxiety (McKinney, 1976); to treat female adult survivors of childhood incest (Faria and Belohlavek, 1984); to provide a creative outlet for cancer patients (Rogers, 1978); and to enable therapists to engage in expanding self-awareness and self-understanding (Baker, 1988). In contrast with the literature that promotes the use of journal writing, there exists a number of works that caution or oppose its use. Allport (1961) comments that one must be alert to symptoms of self-deception, melodramatic expression, and rationalization. In a similar vein, Rainer (1978) says: "The abiding danger is that the journal writer may become passive in life, writing dialogues rather than talking with people, and turn inward rather than take action in the world" (p. 39). Not all individuals have the capacity to utilize writing as a form of therapy. Writing can therefore be "imaginal rather than actional" (Burton, 1965, p. 13).

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM NONEMPIRICAL RESEARCH

In Nichols' (1973) dissertation, an exploratory study was conducted to better understand the experience of journal writing as it relates to the process of self-discovery and how this might be relevant to the field of mental health. Using biographical questionnaires and indepth interviews, the findings of the study pointed to the benefits of writing. These benefits included the expression of feelings, providing a creative outlet, and the enhancement of self-awareness. Furthermore, the findings indicated that the gains of journal writing far outweighed the difficulties and drawbacks. According to Nichols (1973) journal writing is a useful tool for self-help as well as an adjunct to psychotherapy.

Using content analysis and descriptive statistics, McMurray's (1980) doctoral research studied journal keepers according to C. G. Jung's psychological type categories to examine how different psychological types interact with journal keeping behavior. His findings point to the identification of personality tendencies that are associated with various journal keeping behaviors. The suggestion is made for professionals involved in teaching a class or workshop or engaged in therapy with a client to consider psychological types. In this study the critical determinant of whether the journal is used by a person seems to lie in the intuition/sensation dimension (p. 37).

The introversion/extroversion difference indicated how the journal is used, not whether it will be used (p. 109). There is an indication that the extroverted/sensation types are the least effective journal keepers because they are more action-oriented and less inclined toward writing.

In her dissertation, Geissler (1981) provides a description of Karen Horney's work on self-analysis and its contribution to journal therapy. Taking three fundamental psychoanalytic concepts: the unconscious, free association, and resistance, an attempt is made to portray the links that exist between psychoanalytic ideas and journal therapy. Geissler (1981) noted that Horney's work provided a methodological base on which journal therapy can be viewed. Parallels are drawn between Horney's (1942) notions of self-exploration process and journal therapy as both involve: (a) coming to the recognition of a problem area of neurotic tendency; (b) discovering its causes, manifestations and consequences; (c) discovering its interrelationships with other parts of the personality and other problem areas.

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Using a pre- and posttest control group design with seventy-eight university students, Baron's (1978) doctoral research investigated the journal keeping process and the purported effects of this process. After twenty-eight days, the findings were as follows: (a) daily unstructured

self-evaluative writing (i.e., journal keeping) was not shown to yield statistically significant cumulative effects upon self-evaluation or self-actualization; (b) journal keeping did not yield statistically significant immediate effects upon self-evaluation; (c) the gains of journal keeping are more likely to be immediate and transitory rather than cumulative; (d) daily structured self-evaluation (i.e., filling out self-evaluative bipolar checklists on feelings and self-perceptions) did yield significant cumulative effects upon changes in self-evaluation and, for women, significant changes in self-actualization.

In a research study, Levi (1980) examined the efficacy of journal-keeping as a self-help technique for dealing with self-destructive behavior (test anxiety). Two writing therapies were designed to enable the exploration of whether it is more advantageous to treat target symptoms such as test anxiety or more global personality variables (e.g. self-awareness, self-efficacy, self-concept). The subjects were randomly assigned to one of the three following groups: Test Anxiety Treatment Group (TAT), General Anxiety/Attention-Placebo Group (GAP) or the No-Treatment Control Group (NTC). The pretest, consisting of the Achievement Anxiety Scale (AAS) and the Test Anxiety Scale (TAS), and self-report questions were given to all subjects. The findings indicated that all groups improved

significantly. The data from self-reports reflected the TAT group had greater improvement on behavioral variables related to test anxiety (e.g. test-taking behavior), while the GAP group showed more improvement on the self-concept variables such as self-awareness and self-efficacy.

Recent studies have focused on the health and physiological consequences of confiding versus not confiding in others about a traumatic event (Pennebaker, 1990; Pennebaker & Beall, 1986; Pennebaker, Hughes & O'Heeron, 1987; Pennebaker, 1988). The findings indicated that the failure to confide represents an inhibition of sorts. In fact, a significant form of stress is related to the very act of inhibiting or actively holding back the disclosure of important traumas (Pennebaker, Hughes & O'Heeron, 1987). Traumatic events associated with inhibition are evident in major or minor diseases (Pennebaker, 1988).

Pennebaker, Kiecolt-Glaser & Glaser (1988) investigated the effect of confronting traumatic experiences (through writing or talking) in terms of the general model of psychosomatics which points to the association of long-term stress and disease with inhibiting or holding back one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. In this study, fifty university students were asked to write about either traumatic experiences or superficial topics for four consecutive days.

The findings of this experiment suggested that individuals who confronted upsetting experiences in their lives demonstrated improvements in physical health relative to control subjects. The greater health improvements were found in those who wrote about topics that they had actively held back. The findings suggested that the disclosure of traumas is simultaneously associated with improvement in certain aspects of immune function and physical health. Despite the clear disadvantages of writing (e.g. absence of an objective opinion or support from others), alternatively, there is a cost-effectiveness which enables individuals to deal with traumas at their own pace and create their own meaning and solutions to their problems, providing an alternative form of preventative therapy (Pennebaker, Kiecolt-Glaser & Glaser, 1988, p. 245).

In the study done by Edward J. Murray, Alisa D. Lamnin & Charles S. Carver, (1989) on the nature of psychotherapeutic change, Brief Psychotherapy was compared with Written Expression about stressful life events, including a control condition of writing about trivial events using college students as subjects. An effort was made to separate the effects of affective discharge, or simple catharsis, from the more complex cognitive and emotional changes presumably occurring in even brief psychotherapy.

The results demonstrated that Psychotherapy differs from written expression of similar content. While Psychotherapy involves the expression of feelings as well as a therapist-assisted resolution, the mere writing about stressful events does not. In the Psychotherapy condition, there were substantial cognitive, self-esteem, and adaptive changes. In the post-experimental questionnaire, the psychotherapy participants reported that the experience changed their feelings about the event. The adaptive changes in the Psychotherapy condition were greater than those found in Written Expression and were attributed to the interventions of the therapist. The absence of a therapist in the Written Expression condition resulted in the acceleration of the negative emotions as there was no therapist to facilitate basic attitude change and the shift to positive feelings. The mere Written Expression conditions accelerates affect with little self-generated re-appraisal and no signs of emotional resolution.

Summary. While the literature to date addresses journalling primarily in terms of perceptions of the structures and operations of journal writing, perceptions of the benefits derived from journal writing, and some of the perceived limitations, little attention has been given to the process that individuals encounter in journal writing. These perceptions arise from the experiences of a variety of individuals who reflect diverse theoretical

frameworks in their examination and evaluation of the activity of journal writing, an activity defined through the descriptive language of those who write about this activity.

Although some description of the processes involved in the area of journal writing exists (Progoff, 1975), a systematic formulation of these processes is lacking. What is not addressed through systematic research efforts is journal writing as process, a process with a potential for having consistently defineable markers. Journal writing might be appropriately regarded as an attitude rather than a rigidly defined set of structures, standards, and rituals. This present research will shift the focus from structure to process and seek to close the knowledge gap in the area of journal writing by way of addressing journal writing through those who practice this activity and through the research medium of grounded theory. The steps that will be taken in this exploration will be addressed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

THE METHOD

The research approach for any particular focus of study "should be selectively and appropriately used according to the nature of the problem and what is known about the phenomenon to be studied" (Field & Morse, 1985, p. 12). More specifically, the rationale for qualitative research of human behavior is expressed in the following: "Before you impose your theories on the people you study, find out how those people define the world" (Spradley, 1979, p. 14). In order to understand the psychological processes involved in the experience of journal writing, it is important to have the individuals describe their world so that the researcher can formulate patterns in their perceptions and behaviors and generate a theory that reflects their experiences.

The grounded theory method was selected as a suitable approach given the objectives of the present research to identify and explain the processes involved in the journal writers' endeavours to resolve a problematic area in their lives. In this method, "process" is defined as "the linking of sequences of action/interaction as they pertain to the management of, control over, or response to, a phenomenon" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 143). This approach is a qualitative research method in that it

involves the use of a "systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 24).

The aim of grounded theory method is to construct a theory that is consistent with and illuminating of the reality being investigated. Theory may be defined as an explanation of the relationships among the facts that makes sense and enhances understanding (Thomas, 1985). More specifically, a grounded theory is one that is "discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). Because the notion of process has a "time dimension, stages, and turning points" (Fagerhaugh, 1986, p. 934), an analytic focus on process will help to integrate the "who, what, where, when, and why questions of the research problem" (Glaser, 1978, p. 134). The explanatory power of process analysis enables the problem under study to be viewed as a logical and understandable whole.

This chapter will introduce the grounded theory method, outline symbolic interactionism as its theoretical context, and describe the concepts and the research process. Issues pertaining to reliability and validity will also be discussed. This discussion will be followed by a section that will address the procedures involved in applying the research method to the proposed questions.

An Introduction to the Method

The grounded theory method was developed by Glaser (1978) and Glaser and Strauss (1967) in reaction to a research climate that viewed qualitative research as a helpful preliminary to the "real" methodologies of quantitative research (Charmaz, 1983, p. 109). It was also a response to their observation that much research was confined to the quantitative testing of hypotheses originating from the work of a few "favored" theorists (Turner, 1981). This method represents one approach to the qualitative analysis of data. Because of its emphasis on the generation of theory and the data in which the theory is grounded, the approach is termed grounded theory (Glaser, 1978).

As a discovery model, (Bigus, Hadden & Glaser, 1982; Charmaz, 1983; Layder, 1982; Mahrer, 1988) this method "allows us to discover what is there to be discovered" (Mahrer, 1988, p. 694). The questions of interest are: "What patterns can I identify in the problem and how are these problems related?" (Artinian, 1986, p. 16). The researcher attempts to formulate the main processes in the social setting with the goal of generating hypotheses that will have generalized applicability. Hypotheses or propositions suggest how phenomena might be related to one another. There is no particular commitment to specific kinds of data, lines of research, or theoretical interests

as this approach represents a style of doing qualitative analysis, rather than a specific method or technique (Strauss, 1989).

The basic goal of the grounded theory approach is to "generate a theory that accounts for a pattern of behavior which is relevant and problematic for those involved" (Glaser, 1978, p. 93). This method allows the researcher to gather data about a phenomenon of interest, build a model, and generate a theory from data that are systematically obtained from real-world situations as opposed to analogue studies or field experiments. A systematic approach of the procedures for data collection and data analysis has been outlined (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1989; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Glaser (1978) comments that the researcher can provide those knowledgeable in the field of study or "in the know" with substantive theory. "What the man in the know does not want is to be told what he already knows. What he wants is to be told how to handle what he knows with some increment of control and understanding of his area of action" (Glaser, 1978, p. 13). With substantive theory, it is possible for the researcher to move from the "empirical, experiential, descriptive" knowledge, to knowledge that entails "ideationally organized" conceptualization and theory (Glaser, 1978, p. 13). Quoting from Glaser (1978), this movement provides the

researcher with several advantages:

1. He is able to anticipate additional kinds of consequences, conditions and strategies of an act besides what he knows of empirically.

2. He can expand his description and meaning of incidents by placing them in greater scope as his thought transcends the details he knows so well.

3. Concepts are easier to remember than incidents, especially fewer concepts which are integrated in a theory in the place of a multitude of unintegrated incidents. Thus his capacity is potentiated.

4. As the knowledgeable man's theoretical view expands, his social base can expand. He can take on the diversity of larger units, or many units, which if he was limited to only knowing incidents, would overload his capacity. As he learns to transcend particular incidents and transfer concepts to other situations, he can consolidate his broadening power as it opens up possibilities and opportunities. He can organize and map the unknown faster with his ideational tools, which detail new incidents as merely interchangeable with those of familiar underlying uniformities.

5. Men in the know can easily become locked in or status quo oriented, as their knowledge becomes stable, consistent and consolidates their position. With theory their perceptions are amenable to change since they can begin to see the processes, making for change and can modify their ideas to handle the new knowledge. They begin to transcend what was seen as inviolate, by seeing previous happenings as merely elements of patterns in process. They can work with familiar occasions purposefully.

6. By seeing his knowledge in a theoretical view, he can begin to capitalize on it in ways heretofore out of his perception. Possibilities of all kinds open up. His judgement is sharpened, as he sees variable new strategies, conditions and consequences. (p. 13-14)

Criteria For Grounded Theory

There are four central criteria that a well-constructed grounded theory must meet before it can be considered

appropriate to a phenomenon: fit, understanding, generality, and control (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp. 237-250; Glaser, 1978, p. 3; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). According to Glaser & Strauss (1965), this involves the following requirements:

> the theory must be enabled to understand and analyze ongoing situational realities, to produce and predict change in them, and to predict and control consequences both for the object of change and for other parts of the total situation that will be affected. (p. 268)

Rennie, Phillips & Quartaro (1988) explain these criteria as follows:

> It should be believable in that it should seem to the reader to be a plausible explanation. It should be adequate in that it should present a comprehensive account that does not omit large or important portions of the data. It should be grounded in terms of the appropriate procedures and thereby inductively tied to the data. Finally, it should be applicable and should lead to hypotheses and additional investigation. (p. 145)

Theoretical Context

Grounded theory is a research method developed from the implications of the symbolic interactionist view of human behavior. The experiential, inner aspects of human behavior, that is, how people define events or reality and how they act in relation to their beliefs (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986) are of central concern. People create meaning in a situation and this leads to action and the consequences of action. Thus, the focus is on the experiential aspects of human behavior as well as self and social interaction. For example, the study of journal

writing is examined in relation to the interpretation of events related to recreating self. The actions of the participants are determined by the symbolic meanings given to the experiences. As stated by Chenitz & Swanson (1986), "all phenomena and people are subject to redefinition and new meanings through interaction" (p. 6). Therefore, it becomes possible for new definitions of phenomena to create new self-definitions since meaning is created through self.

Advanced by George Mead (1934), the symbolic interactionist school of thought states that the individual acquires a sense of self through social interaction and by learning to see one's self from the perspective of the other. Blumer (1969) notes that symbolic interaction theory rests on three premises that are based on the following belief:

> The human being is not a mere responding organism, only responding to the play of factors from his world or from himself; he is an acting organism who has to cope with and handle such factors and who in so doing has to forge and direct his line of action. (p. 55)

First, "human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them" (Blumer, 1969, p. 2). Institutions, guiding ideals, other human beings, objects, activities of others and situations, or any combination of these are examples.

Second, the meaning of these things is derived from the social interaction that one has with one's fellows. Meaning is created by experience.

Third, these meanings are "handled in, and modified through an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters". (p. 2)

This perspective implies that social reality is a social context in which individuals interact to produce and define their life situations (Denzin, 1978). It also assumes that humans are capable of shaping and guiding their own behavior and that interaction is "emergent, negotiated" and "symbolic" because of the ways in which symbols, words, meanings, and languages are manipulated (Denzin, 1978, p. 7). Finally, the symbolic interactionist view requires that process be given primary focus in scientific investigations. Social processes involve time and its passage. An investigation is seen as complete when the sequences or phases that persons encounter as they move from one stage to another are uncovered and causally analyzed.

Uses of Grounded Theory

The grounded theory approach can make an important contribution in areas where access to various aspects of human experience are difficult or impossible to address with more conventional research methods. In Stern's (1980) view there are two instances in which a strong case for the grounded theory approach may be made. First, it is important in "investigations of relatively uncharted waters" where clearly no theory regarding a situation

exists (p. 20). It is beneficial and at times necessary to attempt to study complex areas of behavior where salient variables have not been identified. In these areas, theory testing cannot be done since the variables relevant to the concepts have not yet been identified. Thus one of the major uses of grounded theory lies in studies that are preliminary, exploratory, and descriptive in nature. This approach, then, can be considered as a precursor to further research.

Quartaro (1986) notes that the appropriateness of the grounded theory approach is also found in situations where some research has been conducted but where there remains a paucity of adequate theories, or no theories which serve as comprehensive explanations of all or most aspects of the phenomenon under investigation. The approach may also be useful as a means for "gaining a fresh perspective in a familiar situation and in demonstrating applicability to practical problems" (Stern, 1980, p. 20).

Description of the Method and Its Concepts

The use of the grounded theory method in studying a phenomenon involves the formulation and development of a provisionally verified theory through systematic data collection and analysis of data that is relevant to that phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). A phenomenon of interest is selected and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge through the research process.

Process Theory

The assumption held by grounded theory researchers is that each specific group (e.g. journal writers) shares a specific social psychological problem that is not necessarily articulated (Hutchinson, 1986). This problem is resolved by means of social psychological processes. By "process", Glaser (1978) refers to a change that takes place over time and that involves the passage between at least two stages. Process is a way of linking the sequences of action/interaction as these relate to the management of, control over, or response to, a phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The grounded theory method, thus, provides the channels to formulate and account for the social and psychological processes engaged in by individuals in their efforts to resolve problematic areas in their lives. When looking for processes, the researcher asks: "What is actually happening in the data? What is the basic problem(s) faced by the participants? What is the main story here and why?" (Strauss, 1989, p. 31) Furthermore, the researcher seeks answers to such questions as: "What kind of events are at issue here? How are they constructed? What do these events mean?" (Charmaz, 1983, p. 113)

Within the grounded theory context, attempts have been made to delineate the social and psychological processes engaged in by individuals attempting to resolve problematic

areas in their lives. Glaser & Strauss (1967) identify two types: a Basic Social Structural Process (BSSP), and secondly, a Basic Social Psychological Process (BSPP). A BSSP emphasizes a "social structure in process- usually growth or deterioration - such as "bureaucratization or debureaucratization, routinization, centralization or decentralization, organizational growth, admitting or recruiting procedures, succession, and so forth" (Glaser, 1978, p. 102). A BSPP, according to Glaser (1978) is a "social psychological process such as becoming, highlighting, personalizing, health optimizing, awe inspiring, and so forth" (p. 102). The BSPP, in comparison with BSSP, is more relevant to the study of behavior. For simplicity the phrase "basic psychosocial process" (BPP) will be used.

A grounded theory is a process theory as the Basic Social Process is the central category around which the theory is developed (Bigus, Hadden & Glaser, 1979; Glaser, 1978). The processes that involve an interaction between psychological factors within the individuals and their social environment are the source of investigation. Viewed in this manner, the BSP takes generic process as its basic analytic focus and consequent endeavors are directed towards formulating theories about the social process (Bigus, Hadden & Glaser, 1982). Unlike unit theory which is concerned with developing static descriptions and/or

conceptualizations of units and their properties (Bigus, Haden & Glaser, 1982) such as intelligence, personality traits, or journal writers, the BSP is an active and dynamic process, of which journal writing is an example.

In process theory, "the referent is the process itself, not the particular unit or units in which it is isolated" (Bigus, Hadden & Glaser, 1982, p. 253). Thus the BSP or core variable serves the purpose of explaining the variations that occur in the actions, perceptions, interactions, and interactional patterns found within the collected data from the research. Theory is generated from the analysis of the collected material. The theory identifies and explains these processes. Typically, one process serves as the "core", which draws together the rest and displays the primary means by which individuals attempt to resolve the particular problem facing them. As a theoretical conceptualization of the emergent generic process, the BSP can be applied to other sites and populations to further test for generalizability.

The Research Process

The process of developing a theory involves five stages outlined by Quartaro (1986), although Turner (1981) proposes that the research be divided into a series of nine stages. It is important to note that these stages are not a series of linear steps. Instead, the investigator operates within a matrix in which several research

processes are simultaneously operating (Stern, 1980). Thus, the investigator examines data as they arrive, begins to code, categorize, conceptualize, and to write the first few ideas concerning the research report almost from the beginning of the research study. From this standpoint, the research may be viewed as simultaneous and/or recursive. The five aspects of the research process are:

1. collection of data
2. comparison of data
3. integration of categories
4. delimitations of the emerging theory
5. presentation of the theory

According to Quartaro (1986) the first four of these stages make up the constant comparative method, which constitutes the core of the grounded theory method.

The Collection of Data

Initially, the selection of the participants is guided by the emphasis on learning what is most central to the phenomena being studied. Subject selection is open to "those persons, places, situations that will provide the greatest opportunity to gather the most relevant data about the phenomenon under investigation (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In open sampling, the selection of participants is indiscriminate since it is still uncertain which concepts are theoretically relevant. As the analysis continues and a tentative theory emerges, individuals are selected on the

basis of the tentative theory. In other words, the researcher seeks to clarify variability and diversity within this focal area. The selection of the sources is guided by how clearly they represent the phenomenon and also how they differ from the initial sources in ways which appear to be relevant. Once the focal aspects are identified, the researcher looks for data sources which are more dissimilar or which represent a possible variation or an extreme case (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The Comparison of Data

The constant comparative method is the foundation of data analysis in the generation of grounded theory. There are two analytic procedures that are basic to the coding process. The first involves making comparisons, the other involves asking questions. These two procedures aid in giving precision and specificity to the concepts in grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The method aims to develop a theory that includes as much behavioral variation as possible through the generation of theoretical constructs, along with substantive codes and categories and their properties. Hutchinson (1986) outlines the steps involved in developing a theory using this method as follows:

> While coding and analyzing the data, the researcher looks for patterns. He or she compares incident with incident, incident with category, and, finally, category with category or construct with construct. By this method, the analyst distinguishes similarities and differences of incidents. By comparing similar

> incidents, the basic properties of a category or construct are defined. Certain differences between incidents establish boundaries; relationships among categories are gradually clarified. Comparative analysis forces the researcher to expand or "tease out" the emerging category or construct by searching for its structure, ...cause, context, dimensions, consequences, and its relationship to other categories. (p. 122)

As data are received, the researcher applies a system of open coding. This is the first basic analytical step which involves the breaking down of the data into discrete parts, examining the data closely, comparing for similarities and differences, and questioning the phenomena as reflected in the data. This involves conceptualizing the data, which means examining an observation, sentence, or paragraph and giving each discrete incident or idea, a name that reflects a representation of a phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Important questions to ask are: What is this? What does it represent?

The choice of an analytic unit is arbitrary as some researchers (Glaser, 1978; Stern, 1980) recommend a line by line analysis of the interview material while others (Rennie, Phillips & Quartaro, 1988) express preference for breaking up the interview into meaning units of individual concepts conveyed by the interviewees. The analysis consists of descriptive summaries, which Glaser & Strauss (1978) refer to as "codes". These descriptive summaries are the invivo or substantive codes. Hutchinson (1986) refers to these codes as Level 1 coding or open coding

which means that each sentence and each incident is coded into as many code units as possible to maximize theoretical coverage. In the early stage of analysis, the code may be idiosyncratic, closely reflecting the language used by the participants or it may be the exact words used by the participants.

Level II coding (Hutchinson, 1986) or categories result when the incidents or coded fragments are compared and contrasted to each other. As defined by Strauss & Corbin, (1990), a category is defined as follows:

> a classification of concepts ...discovered when concepts are compared one against another and appear to pertain to a similar phenomenon. Thus the concepts are grouped together under a higher order, more abstract concept called a category. (p. 61)

The question that guides decisions about categories is: What does this incident indicate? Each incident is compared with other incidents. The question that follows is: What category would include these similar incidents? Finally, the emerging categories are compared with each other to "ensure that they are mutually exclusive and represent all the behavioral variations" (Hutchinson, 1986, p. 120). At this level of coding, the categories are generated and their properties or characteristics of a phenomenon (category) are identified. Quartaro (1986) notes that as the data analysis proceeds, the new data may be accommodated in the existing categories or these may lead to the re-examination of the category scheme that is

emerging. This analysis involves eliminating, splitting, combining or changing of the position of the categories in the developing hierarchy of concepts.

Level III codes (Hutchinson, 1986), or theoretical constructs are a combination of clinical and academic knowledge. These constructs provide meaning and scope to the theory (Glaser, 1978). Theoretical constructs serve the purpose of conceptualizing the relationship among the three levels of codes, "weaving the fractured data back together again" (Glaser, 1978, p. 116). While open coding fractures the data and permits the identification of some categories and their properties, theoretical coding "puts those data back together in new ways by making connections between a category and its subcategories" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Theoretical coding refers to the task of specifying the conditions that give rise to a category (phenomenon); the context in which the phenomenon occurs; the strategies by which it is carried out or managed; and the consequences of those strategies.

Glaser (1978) suggested a number of coding families from which to choose such as: coding families, process, cutting point family, and degree family.

Theoretical Relevance

Relevance is determined by the requirements for generating, delimiting and saturating the theoretical codes (Hutchinson, 1986). A saturation of codes occurs when the

researcher no longer receives new information which would effect the emerging hypotheses. Saturation refers to completeness at all levels, in that there is no new conceptual information that indicates a need for the construction of new codes or the expansion of existing ones. According to Hutchinson (1986), the researcher ultimately achieves a sense of closure by repeatedly checking and asking questions of the data. Thus a code is saturated if the researcher can answer through the data, questions regarding the cause, context, consequences, conditions, strategies and dimensions of the particular category. Substantive categories are matched with theoretical codes (Swanson, 1986). Glaser (1978) provides a more detailed provision to questions of saturation (pp. 74-82), noting that no new categories, properties or relationships among them are found in the analysis of subsequent protocols.

Several grounded theory researchers note that saturation often occurs after the analysis of five to ten protocols (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Quartaro, 1985; Rennie, Phillips & Quartaro, 1988). Glaser (1978) adds that the practical limits of time, energy or money play a part in the saturation process as does the researcher's ongoing processing and reevaluation of the data.

The Integration of Categories

Through the process of theoretical coding, the emerging

theory is finally integrated and delimited. The concepts are compared with variations and alternatives to these concepts to discover their relationship. Related concepts are compared with data for validation. The categories are integrated into higher levels of abstraction. The central categories are the ones which are highly "interrelated with other categories and must occur across most of the data sources, as these will be the basis for the theory that is developed" (Quartaro, 1986, p. 7). The core category is the most central of all the categories and thus plays a vital part in the integration of the theory. The theory is explained by a core category, that is, one which solves or processes the problem addressed, explains as much variation in behavior as possible and uses the fewest number of concepts possible. It is the "main theme: - for what is the main concern or problem for the people in the setting under study" (Glaser, 1978, p. 94). The core category is also characterized by its relationship to other categories.

There are differences between a core category and basic social process which necessitate some distinction. Glaser (1978) notes that BSP's are one type of core category thus all BSP's are core variables, but not all core variables are BSP'S. Furthermore, BSP's are processural and involve a minimum of two clear, emergent stages. These stages differentiate and account for variations in the problematic pattern of behavior. While a core category is present in a

grounded research study, a BSP may not be present.

Memoing

From the point that the researcher begins with the first interview or observations, memo writing becomes a vital and integral part of the research process. Memo writing continually captures the "frontier of the analyst's thinking as he contends with the data, coding, sorting, and writing" (Glaser, 1978, p. 82). In this study, a record of memos and process and analysis notes were kept in a journal which reflected the changes encountered by the researcher through the research process.

The functions of memoing are multi-fold (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, pp. 197-223). In order to generate a quality theory, the descriptions of empirical events must be elevated to a theoretical level. Memoing is an important part of this process as emphasis is placed on conceptualizing ideas. In essence, memos consist of speculations about the analysis and the theory that occur to the researcher as the work proceeds (Quartaro, 1986). The advantage of memoing is that ideas can be captured and set aside until the memos are eventually sorted and integrated with the data analysis. This activity enables the theory to emerge and to be modified as necessary. Certain questions are asked in order to freely develop codes that can be sorted and compared again and again. Hutchinson (1986) outlines the questions as follows:

> While memoing, the researcher asks what relationship one code has to another. Are they separate codes? Is one code a property or a phase in another? Is one event the cause of another or the consequence? What are the conditions that influence the codes? (p. 123)

Rennie, Phillips & Quartaro (1988) provide a comprehensive list of the functions of memos. These functions are as follows:

1. They help the analyst to obtain insight into tacit, guiding assumptions.

2. They raise the conceptual level of the research by encouraging the analyst to think beyond single incidents to themes and patterns in the data.

3. They capture speculations about the properties of categories, or relationships among categories, or possible criteria for the selection of further data sources.

4. They enable the researcher to preserve ideas that have potential value but which may be premature.

5. They are useful if gaps in the relation of theory to data arise, for they provide a record of the researcher's ideas about the analysis and can be used to trace the development of a category.

6. They are used to note thoughts about the similarity of the emerging theory to established theories or concepts.

7. They play a key role in the writeup of the theory. (p. 144)

In summary, memos are an analytic record of the researcher's work and also play a vital role in both the development of the theory as well as the preservation of the auditing process.

Reliability and Validity

In all scientific research, whether quantitative or

qualitative methods are utilized, one must have "adequacy" and "rigor" through demonstrations of reliability, validity, and objectivity, which are terms commonly linked with quantitative research. In their address of the naturalistic paradigm, Lincoln & Guba (1985) present the issue of trustworthiness in the following question: "How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?" (p. 290) The authors further advocate the need in all research for criteria to establish the "truth value", "applicability", "consistency", and "neutrality" (p. 290) and in so doing, provide the parallel terms for naturalistic or qualitative research: credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity).

A. Credibility

Central to identifying the credibility or truth value of qualitative research is the ability to discover and fit the reality of its subjects (Field & Morse, 1985; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). That is, "How can one establish confidence in the "truth" of the findings of a particular inquiry for the subjects (respondents) with which and the context in which the inquiry was carried out?" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). The implementation of the credibility criterion involves a task that is two-fold: first, to conduct the

investigation in such a way that the credibility of the findings is enhanced and, secondly, to show the credibility of the findings through the consensus and approval of the participants (the constructors of the multiple realities being studied). There are a number of ways to establish credibility. First, "member checks" can be done; this means that the data is tested with members of the source group (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 301). Second, "peer debriefing" in terms of interaction with peers, professionals, or dissertation committee members is suggested (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). Third, the theory may be read by individuals who were not participants in the study but who have similar traits (Kus, 1986). Fourth, the period of "prolonged engagement" provides the investigator with an opportunity to build trust and rapport, and to deal with personal distortions and those introduced by the respondents (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 303).

B. Transferability

Applicability or transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of an inquiry have applicability in other contexts or with other subjects. The central question is: "How can one determine the degree to which the findings of a particular inquiry may have applicability in other contexts or with other subjects (respondents)?" (Guba, 1981, p. 80) Transferability between two contexts

may occur because of certain essential similarities (fittingness) between them (Glaser, 1978, Guba, 1981). To determine the extent to which transferability is probable, it is important to know a great deal about or to collect "thick description" about the "transferring and referring contexts" (Guba, 1981, p. 81). Transferability is also enhanced by the use of theoretical or purposive sampling. Rather than focusing on sampling that is representative or typical, the investigator focuses on maximizing the range of information uncovered (Guba, 1981).

C. Consistency

The question of concern is: "How can one determine whether the findings of an inquiry would be consistently repeated if the inquiry were replicated with the same (or similar) context?" (Guba, 1981, p. 80). Consistency is interpeted as dependability. The stability of data is an important concern. In qualitative research, reliability is determined by the ability of subsequent researchers to follow the same procedures with a similar sample to obtain similar results. However, exact replication research in human behavior is not possible but the use of clear and detailed descriptions of the individuals studied, the context, and the procedures followed in the study can enhance reliability.

Lincoln & Guba (1985) suggest that auditability should be the criterion of rigor. This means that a report is

auditable when another individual is able to examine the materials and concerns outlined, follow the development of the research (research process) and understand the account of how the findings came to be. Since no two researchers are alike, no two analyses will be alike. The exact replication of study results would not be attainable due to different researchers. If comparable data and methods were used, similar research findings would be possible. The "audit trail" takes the form of documentation (e.g. actual interview notes taken) and a running account of the process that is contained in the investigator's daily journal (Guba, 1981, p. 87).

D. Confirmability

The issue of confirmability or neutrality addresses the following question: "How can one establish the degree to which the findings of an inquiry are a function solely of subjects (respondents) and conditions of the inquiry and not of the biases, motivations, interests, perspectives, and so on of the inquirer?" (Guba, 1981, p. 80). There are two steps that can be taken to enhance confirmability. First, confirmability is achieved by keeping an audit trail. This involves recording the methods and grounds of the insights of the researcher (Guba, 1981). A "confirmability audit" is important as it certifies that "data exist in support of interpretations" (Guba, 1981, p. 88). Second, the use of triangulation- that is, collecting

data from a variety of data sources or different methods to cross-check data and interpretations is important (Denzin, 1978). The acceptance of an item of information should be based on verification from at least two sources (Brink, 1989; Guba, 1981).

Strengths of the Grounded Theory Approach

The advantages for the researcher in using grounded theory are many. Although not exhaustive, the literature has emphasized some of the advantages of this approach. First, it promotes the development of theoretical accounts and explanations which conform closely to the situations observed so that the theory possesses the likelihood of being intelligible to, and utilized by those in the phenomenon studied. This in turn enables them to make comments and corrections (Turner, 1981). Second, the appeal and utility of the developed theory is enhanced as it is likely to be a complex rather than an oversimplified way of accounting for a complex world (Turner, 1981). Third, the researcher is directed to the creative core of the research process by this approach. The method also facilitates the direct application of both the intellect and the imagination to the process of interpreting research data. Fourth, the grounded theory approach can be a useful technique in investigating areas where the relevant variables have not been identified (Stern, 1980). Fifth, grounded theorists have argued that discovery is inhibited

when a certain theoretical position has to be proven or disproven as in the methodology characteristic of quantitative research. In the discovery model of grounded theory, the theory fits the data, and not vice versa.

Procedures

The Selection of Informants

In qualitative research, the informants are chosen for their knowledge of the topic under study, their ability to communicate, and their willingness to share their knowledge and time with the researcher (Morse, 1986). Initially, the selection of the participants is based on those individuals who are likely to represent the phenomenon. This step is taken to ensure the generation of categories and consensus about their properties (Rennie, Phillips & Quartaro, 1988). As the study progresses, the researcher seeks to obtain a "purposeful or theoretical sample" (Morse, 1989, p. 110; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, pp. 176-193) in which the participants are selected according to the needs of the study (Bogdan & Biklen 1982; Glaser, 1978). The informants are selected on the basis of their particular knowledge or atypical experience related to the emerging theory. This selection of potential qualifiers of the emerging theory or variability is referred to as theoretical sampling by Glaser & Strauss (1978) or theory-based data selection (Rennie, Phillips & Quartaro, 1988).

Selection Criteria

A number of criteria were used in choosing journal writers for the research study. First, the individuals perceived themselves to be journal writers, not diary keepers as distinguished earlier in the study. This means that they wrote for personal, self-reflection and not for the primary purpose of documenting external events such as the weather or politics. Second, the participants were eighteen years of age or older. Third, the participants had maintained a journal for at least one year and were engaged in journal writing at the time of the study.

Prior to the study an arbitrary decision was made to exclude those individuals who had previous or present involvement in counselling of some kind. However, interviews with the participants indicated that those who sought counselling did not constitute a distinct group. While some were recently or presently in therapy, others had not been involved in any formal counselling. Thus a decision was made to include individuals who had previous or present contact with counsellors.

The informants who met the criteria were obtained from several sources: (1) the researcher, herself, participated in an Ira Progoff Intensive Journal Workshop. Permission was obtained from the instructor to briefly introduce the research topic at the conclusion of the workshop. Six individuals expressed interest in participating in the

study and a list of names and telephone numbers was obtained. (2) Participants were also located directly by the researcher from contacts with colleagues and acquaintances in the general population, or referrals from participants in the study. Telephone contact with prospective participants began in October, 1989, and the research process was explained to each individual. This included an explanation of the purpose of the research study, issues of confidentiality, the nature of the conversations, and the time commitment of the interviews. Participants were also informed that if they wished to decline participation, this decision would be respected. The participants were given a choice as to the location of the interview. Two individuals chose to be interviewed in their workplace, three to be interviewed in my office, and one to be interviewed in her home.

The composition of the sample was controlled by primary and secondary selection procedures. This meant that the researcher had some control in terms of who was initially selected by phone contact and later during the interview itself. For example, after an initial phone contact, one woman clearly saw herself as a diary keeper, not a journal writer. Another woman who initially expressed interest in participating, later acknowledged her "resistance" to talking about her personal life and being taped. These two individuals were excluded from the study.

The Participants

The participants in this study were three women and three men who were willing to describe and share their experiences of journal writing with me. All six informants were Caucasian. There were variations in terms of age (19-50 years), educational level (grade 12 to Ph.D degree), marital status (single and involved/not involved in a significant relationship, married, divorced), occupation, duration of journal writing (12 months to 20 years), and training received in journal writing. All six participants were writing spontaneously in that they did not view themselves as writing in a structured manner (content, style or frequency) that was dictated or stipulated by another source apart from themselves (e.g. counsellor, teacher, writing workshops, etc).

Data Collection

The Interview

Unstructured audio-taped interviews were used as the primary means of data collection. The interviews began with general and informal conversation to establish rapport with the participant, followed by an explanation of the purpose and nature of the research study. Any questions that the participants raised concerning the research were addressed. Overall, the participants were open and willing to discuss their journal writing. Several informants initially expressed concern about whether or not their

journals would be read by the researcher. The researcher assured them that access to their journals was not a requirement of the study.

After reading the purpose of the study, each informant signed a letter that provided informed consent to participate in the study (See Ethical Considerations and Appendix A). It was explained that the researcher would transcribe the interviews and all identifying information would be excluded from the transcription. The individuals were informed that if they wished to exclude comments from the transcript after reading it, this decision would be respected.

During the initial interview, the participants completed a questionnaire that elicited demographic information such as age, marital status, level of education, vocation, and length of time as a journal writer. This information provided details to reflect the diversity of the individuals' backgrounds.

In keeping with the grounded theory method which requires that the initial data collected typify the phenomena, the first two informants were individuals who had a lengthy history of journal writing. Both these individuals had begun journal writing as teenagers or young adults and involved a span of at least twenty years of journal writing. The researcher used several general questions as guidelines during the interview: Tell me

about how you first began journal writing. How did you come in contact with the idea of writing in a journal? What was happening in your life at the time you began? These two informants were interviewed separately, allowing for comparison of data.

The interviewing process with the six subjects took place between October 1989 and August 1990. The initial interviews ranged from forty-five minutes to ninety minutes in length. Subsequent interviews were generally of a shorter duration. The number of interviews with each participant ranged from two to three. A total of fourteen interviews were collected. During the ten months of interviewing, the distribution of interviews among the six informants was as follows: three interviews with the first two subjects and two interviews with the remaining four subjects.

Scripting

After each interview, the tapes were transcribed by the researcher. Any names or other information that could identify the participants were excluded from the verbatim transcriptions. This step served to protect anonymity. The opportunity of listening to the taped interviews allowed the researcher to consider the intonations and more subtle verbal aspects of the interviewees' conversations. Strauss (1989) comments on the importance of listening to the tapes intensely whenever possible in the following:

> You may want full transcription also if you have the money to have the tapes transcribed - but then you must listen to the tapes intensely, and more than once anyhow. Why? To remind yourself of things that you observed that you didn't fully record; or to remind yourself of things you noticed during an interview and have now forgotten - or never noticed at the time. Listening as well as transcribing is essential for a full and varied analysis. (p. 207)

Transcripts of the first interview were read by a member of the dissertation committee as well as the peer group. This measure helped to monitor the process of interviewing and provided a check in terms of the researcher's interviewing style. Feedback was provided by these individuals and modifications in interviewing style were made.

The typed transcripts were sent by mail or given in person to the participants prior to subsequent interviews. Each informant was given a copy of the transcript to read over and make further comments or corrections. This procedure allowed for the correction of possible errors, facilitated the validation of the information, and provided a starting point for the next interview.

The changes or corrections that resulted from returning the protocols to the individuals were more stylistically related than content oriented. For example, two participants made grammatical changes and re-arranged sentences to enhance the readability of the transcript. One of these individuals also elaborated on several ideas

to provide more clarity. The individuals commented that their participation in the research had been helpful to them, particularly in terms of talking to another person about their journal writing. Several individuals noted that this sharing was a unique, first experience for them as they had not previously had the opportunity to reflect upon their journal writing in any indepth way.

In preparation for the analysis of data, the researcher took the following steps. After each taped interview, the verbatim transcripts were typed with double spacing and wide right hand margins to allow for the code words to be noted. Extra copies of each transcript were made so that during the open coding stage, meaning units or incidents could be coded into as many codes as possible to insure full theoretical coverage. Each statement was also numerically coded to reflect the participant number, interview number and the line number from which the statement originated.

A cut and paste method was used to organize the coding. The data were coded using the extra copies of material to allow for the maximum number of codes to be assigned to any one particular statement or series of statements. Each coded segment of material was cut from the copied material and clustered with other material according to its particular code. Similar codes were placed in their approriate envelopes. The researcher

checked to insure that the clustered material had appropriateness as well as fit. The labelling of the file folders was changed to reflect the more highly conceptual codes that were emerging from the data analysis.

Categorization

At each stage of coding, the constant comparative method was used to explore common meanings between and within interviews. For each set of two participants, a line by line analysis was conducted using in vivo or substantive codes. This level of coding helped to organize the material on a descriptive level and minimized the researcher's chances of straying from or distorting the substance of the data. During this initial stage of analysis or "level I coding" (Hutchinson, 1986, p. 120), the researcher used words from the informants' own language. Examples of early substantive coding in this research were "being shy and quiet", "being a loner", and "experiencing rejection".

To insure full theoretical coverage, open coding was implemented. This means that each sentence or each incident was coded into as many codes as possible. For example, an incident "as a kid, I'm sure it provided a place to vent" was coded as both "beginning: as a kid" and "self-expression: being able to vent".

For the next level of coding, Level II coding, the researcher used broader, more common descriptive terms that

were later subsumed in a larger category. The incidents were compared and contrasted to one another, and similar incidents were categorized under a conceptual label. For example, one participant's statement, "the process (journalling) has been a sort of rediscovering myself and rebirthing myself in different ways" was initially assigned the codes "being able to rediscover self" and "rebirthing self" and later assigned to the categories, "identifying the need" and "evaluating/appraising journal". New categories were also developed to represent information that did not fit into existing ones.

The Level III codes or theoretical constructs involve higher levels of abstraction, are derived from a combination of academic/clinical knowledge and reflect a "blend of descriptive and constructed categories with the former often subsumable under the latter" (Rennie, Phillips & Quartaro, 1988, p. 143). These constructs contribute theoretical meaning and scope to the theory (Glaser, 1978). Quartaro (1986) notes that central categories are "usually abstract and come out of the language and frame of reference of the analyst rather than the respondent" despite being grounded in specific datum incidents (p. 7). The development of relationships, patterns and processes in the data through constant comparison resulted in the grouping of material into broader conceptual categories. Examples from this study were "Focusing on Self" and

"Maintaining Self". As the analysis proceeded, it became clear that some categories were characteristics or properties of other categories.

The first four interviews were analyzed and coded using the constant comparative method outlined in this chapter. After four interviews were coded, a theory with four stages emerged. The substantive codes were linked together in hypothetical relationships. According to Glaser (1978), "theoretical codes conceptualize how substantive codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into a theory" (p. 72). To organize the data from this study, a number of theoretical codes were selected from Glaser's (1978) list of coding families. These include stages, conditions, contexts, consequences, and strategies.

At this point, the researcher commenced a secondary review of the literature on topics such as counselling, creativity, experiential learning, loneliness and isolation. Numerous published journals were also read so that the proposed theory could be illuminated or extended.

Based on the data analysis, the fifth and sixth informants were selected for the purpose of providing information to facilitate optimum variation in the study. Characteristics that were atypical to the findings were included so that new or incoming information would be saturated. At this point, the researcher began to consider a core category entitled, "composting: the cultivation of

experience" as it was a category that appeared frequently in the data. Initially, it seemed that several categories could be subsumed and organized under "composting" in a meaningful way. With further analysis, "composting: the cultivation of experience" fitted as a major category (Stage Three). It became evident from this investigation that the most central factors that accounted for journal writing was "recreating self". This was considered to be the basic psychosocial process. Further peer group meetings and deliberations helped to consolidate this category as most central.

Data were also obtained from numerous secondary informants to aid in the confirmation of the findings and the emerging theory. Field & Morse (1985) define secondary informants as "all other persons within the same setting, or people in similar situations in other settings" (p. 59). In this study, secondary informants provided data to confirm (verify) the findings and the emerging theory. After explaining the theory of journal writing to one informant, he expressed interest in having the researcher read his journal. This opportunity provided another source of validation for the findings.

The researcher looked for atypical cases, i.e. possible variations in experiences that did not fit the "typical" pattern. For example, the experiences of those who were longstanding journal writers were compared to those who had

written for a relatively short duration (one year). Other examples of comparison included those involved in a significant relationship versus those who were not; those who were engaged in some form of counselling versus those who were not; and those who had taken formal training in journal writing versus those who did not. The fifth participant was an example of an atypical case. Unlike the other participants who found journal writing to provide a means of dealing with social and/or emotional isolation and the accompanying experiences of rejection or anxiety, this individual noted that journal writing facilitated the cultivation and expression of creativity in professional pursuits. Being able to deal directly and effectively in social relationships were the reasons given for not needing to use the journal to deal with interpersonal issues.

Ensuring Reliability and Validity

As outlined earlier in the chapter, issues of reliability and validity are important considerations in research. The following is a descriptive summary of the steps taken by the researcher to deal with reliability and validity.

A. Credibility (Truth Value)

In this study, the researcher made use of the following activities or techniques to enhance credibility. These practices have been suggested by several authors (Guba, 1981; Hutchinson, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Verbatim transcripts of the interviews were used. Effort was made to obtain as much volunteered information from the informants as possible through the use of unstructured interviews. Credibility was enhanced by the researcher's prolonged engagement with the study. The interviewing process took place over the course of nine months. This time investment enabled trust and rapport to be built with the informants. Each informant was also interviewed at least twice. This facilitated the checking and rechecking of the collected data for fit. The findings were shared with the informants and checked with multiple sources such as the informants themselves, secondary informants (other journal writers, individuals in counselling who were journalling, journal workshop trainers, and counsellors), researchers, readers, and with different sources of similar information such as published journals. The resulting theory was also presented at a local conference and to two classes of graduate students taking a journal writing research course. Overall, the theory was found to be fitting and useful in articulating the concerns of those involved in journal writing.

The researcher was involved with a peer debriefing group which consisted of a study group of doctoral students who were at various stages of grounded theory research. These sessions provided an opportunity for the researcher's biases and findings to be explored, challenged, and clarified.

Furthermore, while analyzing the data, the researcher identified her own assumptions, ideas and values in the form of memos. The explicit acknowledgement of biases allowed the researcher to be more vigilant about the effects of researcher bias (Quartaro, 1986).

B. Transferability (Applicability)

In determining applicability, transferability was established by collecting descriptive data such as sex, age, marital status, occupation, level of education, ethnic origin, length of time as a journal writer, and formal training received in journal writing. As Guba notes,

> Transferability is itself dependent upon the degree of similarity (fittingness) between two contexts. The naturalist does not attempt to form generalizations that will hold in all times and in all places, but to form working hypotheses that may be transferred from one context to another depending upon the degree of "fit" between the two contexts. (p. 81)

The researcher looked for informants who would volunteer to provide information that facilitated the development of the theory. This step was taken as a means of maximizing the range of information obtained. As noted, the fifth and sixth participants were interviewed with this goal in mind. For example, the findings pointed to the keeping of a journal as a result of an experience of significant change that was accompanied by sadness, loneliness, and anxiety. Efforts were made to consider individuals whose points of view were different. Journal writers who experienced contentment and self-satisfaction

in their lives were also interviewed.

There are varying perspectives on the issue of transferability. Hutchinson (1986) states that:

> A substantive theory can only be valid for the studied population. A quality theory will inevitably identify a BSP (Basic Social Process) that is also relevant for people in general. (p. 116)

Quartaro (1986), however, notes that small, non-random samples do not permit generalization to other populations.

C. Dependability (Consistency)

In qualitative research, reliability is determined by the ability of subsequent researchers to follow the same procedures with a similar sample to obtain similar results. The use of clear and detailed descriptions of the individuals studied, the context, and the procedures followed in the study can enhance reliability. Although a different researcher would not achieve exact replication of findings, similar findings would be possible if comparable data and methods were employed.

In this study, the "audit trail" took the form of a running account of the research process that was kept in the investigator's journal as well as documentation in the form of the actual interview notes taken and ongoing memos. The grounded theory research group consisting of doctoral students provided a channel for the process of analysis to be reviewed on an ongoing basis. Weekly discussions dealt with such issues as difficulties

encountered in the research process, conceptualizing categories, and formulating hypotheses.

D. Confirmability (Neutrality)

In terms of the conduct of the research as well as in relationship to the research findings, there is the need to consider the issue of freedom from bias. In qualitative research the focus and reliance upon the subjective perspectives of the informants and the subjective views and creative resources of the researcher has been criticized for not maintaining appropriate neutrality. In dealing with the issue of neutrality, the researcher took the following steps.

The research in progress and study findings were checked with outsiders or colleagues. The regular writing of memos also helped to identify researcher bias (Strauss, 1989). The researcher engaged in the practice of reflexivity in which introspections and ideas were recorded regularly. This helped to account for the underlying assumptions and methodological decisions made as well as the reasons for making them. It also enabled the documentation of the processes involved as well as the shifts and changes in the researcher's thinking. In this way, reflexivity provided a record of the variety of information collected about self as researcher. Berger and Kellner (1981) note the importance of bracketing in the following statement:

> If bracketing is not done, the scientific enterprise collapses and what the researcher then believes to be perceived is nothing but a mirror image of his own hopes and fears, wishes, resentments or other psychic needs; he will then not perceive anything that can reasonably be called reality. (p. 52)

The use of triangulation, that is, collecting data from a variety of perspectives, drawing upon a variety of sources, and using a variety of data collection methods were important considerations. In this study, the data collection sources included unstructured interviews with primary participants and secondary informants and the reading of published journals. These measures are in keeping with Guba's (1981) recommendation that documentation for every claim be obtained from at least two sources.

Lincoln & Guba (1985) note that when truth value, auditability and applicability have been adequately addressed, confirmability or neutrality in the research is achieved.

Ethical Considerations

Ensuring anonymity and confidentiality are important considerations for participants in a research study. Attempts were made to remove all identifying information which may have personally linked the individual to the research study. Each interview was identified only by numbers assigned to each subject and the number of the

interview. Thus the third participant (P), interviewed (I) for the second time was identified as P-3, I-2.

Adequate preparation of the participant in terms of the nature of the research is also an important ethical consideration. Prior to the interview, the participants each received an explanation about the purpose and nature of the study. Any questions that were raised about the study were answered. A letter of informed consent (See Appendix A) was signed by each participant. Individuals were informed of their right to refuse to respond to any part of the interview and their right to withdraw from the research study at any time. The potential risks and benefits of the study were also discussed with the participants. The participants were informed that the tapes and transcripts would be stored in a secured location and that upon the completion of the study, the tapes would be erased.

In summary, this chapter provided a descriptive outline of the grounded theory method, the concepts that are important to this method, and the issues of reliability and validity. This was followed by a discussion of the procedures taken by the researcher to implement a grounded theory study on journal writing. The chapter to follow will present a summary of the findings that resulted from this research endeavour.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ANALYSIS PROCESS

This chapter will focus on the interpretations and results that were derived from utilizing the operational strategies of the grounded theory method. Each stage will be discussed in turn. Briefly, the basic social process that emerged from this research study was Recreating Self, which accounts for how journal writing behavior provides a channel for resolving the individual's basic problem: having to contend with self-dissatisfaction. This process takes place in four stages: (a) Focusing On Self; (b) Exploring Options; (c) Composting: The Cultivation of Experience; and (d) Maintaining Self.

Analysis of the Transcripts

As noted earlier, one of the initial steps of data analysis involved the coding of the transcripts on a line-by-line basis. This has also been referred to as Level 1 coding, open coding or invivo coding. In the formulation of the stages, each sentence of the raw data that appeared meaningful or captured the action in the setting was noted as a meaning unit. Often the exact words of the subjects were used in early coding. For example, the sentence "it (journal writing) was always when someone rejected me" involved the highlighting of "when someone rejected me". The sentence, "it was a place for me to be depressed, to feel sad" was highlighted as "a place to be

sad" and "a place to be depressed". Each transcript generated numerous meaning units.

For the next step, Level II codes or categories (substantive coding) were applied to the transcripts. This meant that a code word (or code words) was attached to each meaning unit (incident). Decisions about categories were made by asking such questions as: What does this incident indicate? Each incident was compared with other incidents. What category would include these similar incidents? Do these meaning units refer to the same thing? Can these meaning units be coded together? How could they be coded if they are different? Thus, the sentence, "it (journal writing) was always when someone rejected me" was coded Specifying Use: Rejection in reference to writing in the journal about rejection. In the process, the data that did not seem relevant were discarded. For example the sentence, "When he came home, everybody..the whole family went to Calgary with my mom and dad" was excluded from further coding.

As the data analysis proceeded and more transcripts were coded, additional codes as well as larger categories were generated. For example, when the code "Specifying Use: Rejection was applied to other transcripts, more examples of this code became apparent (e.g., parent-child issues, marital separation, and religious differences. Each of these examples reflected the experience of

rejection and were placed in a larger sub-category with the label "Experiencing Rejection". This category reflected the essence of the meaning units contained within it.

Level III codes, or theoretical constructs, were derived from a combination of academic and clinical knowledge. Experiencing Rejection was eventually subsumed by a more conceptual category Stage One: Focusing On Self since the experience of rejection appeared to be an important aspect of contending with self-dissatisfaction. The name of the major category Focusing On Self was developed intuitively. It was a name that captured the content of the categories satisfactorily. As Glaser (1978) noted, theoretical constructs conceptualize the relationship between the three levels of codes, "weaving the fractured data back together again" (p. 116).

At this point in the data analysis, it became important to pose certain questions during the coding process that would enable the researcher to grasp the data and establish theoretical codes. It was essential to make decisions about how to label the categorized data in such a way that a theoretical framework would be formulated to capture the journal writing process. The questions the researcher asked about her data were derived from what Glaser (1978, pp. 74-82) refers to as conditions, causes, contexts, consequences, strategies, and stages. Such questions provided a structured way to analyze the data and served as

a preliminary step to discovering the Basic Social Process and its related properties. The following questions are asked of each category: "Is this category a condition of some other category? Is it a cause or a context? For example, what is the cause of journal writing behavior? It was learned that the individuals who began journal writing were confronted with situations such as relationship loss, separation, moving away from home, or relationship conflicts. These experiences often left the individual with the sense of rejection, anxiety, anger, or confusion. The context refers to the environment or setting where the behavior occurs. The journal writers cited numerous examples of personal change and transitions in their adult lives. The nature of the changes were physical, emotional, social, spiritual and mental.

In approaching the data with questions pertaining to coding strategies, the codes were organized in such a manner that Stage One: Focusing On Self was the major category. At this level of analysis, an attempt was made to sort the data in terms of distinctions. The task at hand was to clarify what each category is in relation to other categories, and thus, to develop theoretical links between the categories. These links will in turn lead to the development of a process and the generation of a theory.

The researcher systematically asked questions and

looked for categories that provided answers to these questions. The categories that addressed the questions of context were: transitions, personal/intrapersonal issues, and adulthood. The conditions for Focusing on Self were identified as experiencing: rejection, loneliness, confusion, anger, anxiety, and isolation. Turning to Self was noted to be the strategy used by the journal writer in response to the issues at hand. The consequences addressed were wanting privacy, fearing misunderstanding or further rejection, and reserving one's opinions or emotions.

Another coding family, a process, was reported as the analysis revealed four stages that referred to getting something done over time. The first stage in the journal writing process was the category, "Focusing on Self". The categories that matched the theoretical codes served as properties or characteristics of the major category. Furthermore, process is characterized as having time dimension, stages, and turning points. Gerunds such as Focusing on Self, suggest movement and change, or process, over time.

Overall, the four stages provide a developmental framework that accounts for how individuals contend with self-dissatisfaction using the medium of the journal. The framework also reflects the steps taken by the individual to re-create different aspects of life. Stage One: Focusing On Self captures the beginning of the journal

writing process and provides the essential links to enter the succeeding stages in pursuit of self-development.

The next section of this chapter will provide a more in-depth description of Stage One. Supporting quotes from the participants will be included as well.

STAGE ONE: FOCUSING ON SELF

The first stage in the process of journal writing is Focusing on Self. This the stage that provides the foundation for the succeeding stages. It is also the stage in which the basic strategy, turning to self, is adopted. See Table 2 for an overview of the contexts, conditions, strategies, and consequences that characterize this stage.

Table 2
Overview of Stage One: Focusing on Self

Contexts	Conditions	Strategy	Consequences
transition	experiencing rejection	turning to self	wanting
personal/ intrapersonal	experiencing loneliness		fearing
	experiencing confusion		reserving
adulthood	experiencing anger		
	experiencing anxiety		
	experiencing isolation		

> I had taken a sensitivity workshop in my first year of college and that got me really interested in discovering about myself...I was at that time,

> looking back, I was very shy, quiet, probably a bit of a loner and not very good at expressing myself. And that first term in university, I just really started jotting down things that seemed meaningful to me from the philosophy course and just relating all those things to myself.

Contexts

In human communication the notion of context is important as it recognizes the presence of factors in the environment or setting where behavior occurs. These factors are embedded in communication and thus serve to define or provide meaning to the communication as well as a frame of reference for the individuals in the communication. Context represents the "particular set of conditions within which the action/interactional strategies are taken" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 96). Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson (1967) note the interplay between behavior and context in the following comment:

> A phenomenon remains unexplainable as long as the range of observations is not wide enough to include the context in which the phenomenon occurs. (p. 20)

Personal/Intrapersonal

In Stage One, the events and changes occur within the context of the individual's personal life. The changes that an individual experiences result in the need and desire to focus on the impact and meaning of these events. The impact of the event or concern can be experienced within the individual on emotional, physical, social, and spiritual levels and thus, the context is intrapersonal. These concerns may involve conflict or questioning of self

and/or others values, beliefs, or roles. One individual noted how her deteriorating relationship with her husband prompted her to examine herself:

> I was angry and didn't have anyone to share it with. I can remember taking a notebook and writing in it...writing how I felt and describing the situation which had something to do with my husband leaving the house when we had lots of small children and I was really angry at him. I said to myself, "I should be more understanding. I'm the one working on improving myself". Then, when I went to write it out, it was like, all of a sudden, I'm writing this angry stuff...I was the kind of person that didn't ever voice what was bothering me. When people would ask, "What's the matter?", I'd always say "nothing" and that wasn't true, you know. A lot was the matter.

Generally, journal writing occurs in a private context. It is a solitary activity- something that is done alone. However, within this private context, the individual is interacting with one or more aspects of self or other individuals that exist in the real or imagined world. These interactions shape the journal writing and the journal writing, in turn, shapes the individual's interaction with the world that exists outside of the personal context. This becomes more evident by Stage III.

Change/Transition

> It started back in about 1959...so what's that? About thirty years ago. I was just out of high school in B.C. actually and it was just about time to go to university and I guess I thought this was the time of change.

The journal writer-to-be initiates Stage One by participating in a context of change or transition. This experience of change may have taken place in the past, is

occurring in the present or is anticipated in the future. In Stage One, the individual tends to perceive the events of change as negative and unwelcomed. Examples of change include moving away from home for the first time, coping with the death of a parent, dealing with chronic illness, beginning a new relationship, and experiencing interpersonal difficulties. The individual may view change as involving personal choice such as moving to another city or not involving much choice or control such as chronic pain or the death of a loved one. One individual described the change experienced in the pending loss of a parent:

> When we were told that the disease was terminal, I felt this tremendous weight on me as it meant that I would need to start growing up even faster..looking after family affairs, going to the hospital, wading through schoolwork, and basically having to get serious about everything, especially my first experience of someone close to me dying. Looking back, that was a painful and very long year. I seemed to write a lot then...like I needed to be alone a lot more.

Adulthood

Being an adult is an important part of the context in this stage as well as in subsequent stages. The notion of adulthood is one that is culturally defined. There are expectations and roles that are associated with this stage of life. Erikson (1968) addresses the importance of the capacity for productive work and intimacy in early adulthood, generativity in middle adulthood, and ego integrity (a feeling of completion and fulfillment) in late adulthood. These qualities represent signs of health.

People who do not develop a capacity in these areas will avoid close contacts and experience isolation, interpersonal impoverishment and despair.

The informants made reference to some of the developmental tasks they encountered such as dealing with the birth of a child, searching for an intimate partner, entering intimate relationships, and dealing with the despair of past failures and the absence of meaning in life. One individual, for example, mentioned several aspects of life that required his response as an adult:

> It's (the journal) been with me through getting married, moving East, going through a divorce, going through my first job experiences, my university education, through my father's sickness and his death and moving into new relationships. So, through all of that, it's been a source of sustenance to figure out, "Well, who is this--and what am I all about? What are my values? What is really important? What is my direction?"...and try to understand the issues and understand myself in relationships.

The strategy of Turning To Self is relevant for the individuals who are in search of belonging, love, and esteem. One informant articulates the sense of isolation and despair encountered and the journey taken to discover meaning in life:

> And the part I'm running away from is the sense of despair that I get sometimes when I can't find meaning in life. Like, what's the purpose of it all?" My head can answer that question, "Well, we know the purpose and that is to come here to earth, get a body, learn to run it and learn all kinds of things." What's the point? We get married, have children, they get married and have children. What's the point?

It is important to note that these conditions vary in

nature and extent among the individuals. Thus experiencing loneliness may be primary for one person, experiencing rejection for another, and experiencing isolation for yet another. Essentially, this stage involves the interacting of conditions among each other. This results in the stage, Focusing on Self.

Conditions

Experiencing Rejection

> My original writing was like a desperate little gasp that would pop out of me every so often. And I felt the need to express a lot of pain and I would write and..not physical pain but emotional pain. It was always boy/girl stuff and it was always when someone rejected me or I desperately loved someone who didn't love me. And only when I was unhappy did I write in my diary. Never wrote when, you know, love had bloomed or whatever. I wrote whenever it was being snatched away.

Experiencing rejection is one of the conditions of focusing on self. There are two types of rejection: interpersonal and personal. Interpersonal rejection may be initiated by one or more individuals toward another at a physical and/or emotional level. In this situation, the rejection is other-imposed or originates from the external realm. Personal rejection involves the individual's refusal to accept, use or believe some aspect of self such as a behavior or characteristic. This kind of rejection is self-imposed as the individual has chosen to set aside or abandon certain behavioral, emotional, or physical characteristics.

Examples of interpersonal rejection include marital

separation/divorce, parent-child conflicts, friendships that involve strong value differences, and being a member of an exclusive religious group. At times, the individual is not in the position of being rejected but instead takes the initiative to set aside someone or something such as a certain value or behavior. One informant took steps to terminate a relationship after years of trying to help her alcoholic partner while another individual also left her partner after a period of accusations of her unfaithfulness and persistent threats of physical abuse. All of the informants made reference to their experience of interpersonal rejection as uncomfortable and negative while they were in the midst of it. The rejection may be of a temporary nature where reconciliation occurs at some point or it may be longstanding. One informant spoke of the ongoing rejection she experienced:

> I was actually afraid of and very dominated by my second husband. I really was unaware of how mean and cruel he really was and what it would do to my relationship with my son in later years. But you see, now my son hasn't forgiven me for staying with that man for that long, you know. So there's kind of like a wall between us because of that.

An example of a temporary experience of rejection is expressed by one informant involved in religious work:

> We work with a companion. We're with each other 24 hours a day. We're really never separate except when we use the restroom...And every Saturday night we kind of have a little discussion time where we tell each other our concerns. We try to build each other up but it usually turns out to be the time that we nitpick. It was a time that we got into a bout with words. We really started telling each other what we disliked

> about each other and things like that. Soon there was really no love in it and we kind of were going at each other's throat just really tearing each other down...And after it was over, I really felt bad about it.

As alluded to earlier, the individuals also spoke of wanting to modify or eliminate some aspect about themselves that they perceived as undesirable. Examples include the desire to be less fearful of intimate relationships, express anger appropriately, and become more socially connected. One individual described his awareness of a personal issue which he sought to resolve:

> It's like hurting yourself. I sort of felt I had to know everything and that's alright as an aspiration but I had to be right and that was a disease...I always had to win. Well, you don't make friends when you treat people like that.

This individual viewed his personal difficulty as a disease which connotes an unhealthy condition and malfunction. Not only is the individual undergoing a personal rejection of an undesirable part of himself, but also interpersonal rejection that results from personal shortcomings.

Rejections become relevant factors when they affect the individual's sense of self-acceptance, confidence, and adequacy. There is an awareness of something that has gone amiss, something needing reappraisal and change. The experience of rejection is often accompanied by fear, anger, frustration, and loneliness. There may be specific fears such as the fear of being alone, fear of trusting others, fear of trusting one's ability to decide, and fear

of criticism. At this point, these emotions serve as causal factors in the decision to begin focusing on self.

Experiencing Loneliness

> Before I came out on my mission, my tension-breakers would be listening to music. I had a motorcycle that I'd just love to go out and ride. I did those things to ease some of the tensions and my loneliness. When I came on my mission, not being able to listen to music especially during emotional times...music was the thing that would always get me through. If I was ever tense, my motorcycle. I always had something that would take away whatever was happening at the moment. Then, when you're out on the mission, you're taken away from those things. You can't do them. So, personally for me there was a big loneliness. There have been a lot of times when I've felt alone especially when you're about a thousand miles away from home and your friends that have been your friends forever. And all of of a sudden you're with a lot of strangers.

Experiencing loneliness is another condition of Focusing on Self. What is characteristic about this condition is the sense of unhappiness and isolation resulting from the loneliness that stems from change and transition. This condition may be subjectively experienced as "feeling homesick", "being alone alot", "being shy and quiet", and "not being good at making friends". It is marked by a sense of having to go through an experience alone, missing something or someone to share the experience with, or recognizing the finality of certain losses such as divorce or death.

Several informants spoke of the difficulty they encountered after their decision to move away to a new city and the lack of close ties as well as their tendency to be

"loners" and avoid disclosing information about themselves.

Experiencing Confusion

> Well, when I was confused, when I was down and discouraged didn't know which direction to go or how to make sense of something in a relationship or something in my personal life, I could go to my journal and write about it and kind of explore the pros and cons and express the feelings I was having and try to sort it out . You know - some issue in a relationship with one of my girlfriends - that would be an ongoing kind of issue. I'd be confused about it and so I'd write about it this way and that way. And I'd tie it in with my readings, things I would learn in school and things I was learning from others.

Experiencing confusion is another condition that is involved in the individual's initiative to begin focusing on self. The source of confusion or being perplexed may be interpersonal such as accusations by a significant other, the deterioration of an important relationship or a hoped for relationship, and the growing pains of establishing a meaningful relationship with another individual. It is also conceivable that personal factors may be involved in the individual's experience of confusion. Examples include the management of chronic pain, changing lifestyles or behaviors, and dealing with existential issues such as how to rediscover meaning in life and establish priorities.

> Well, when I see the words on paper, it's very simple for me to sort out what's the wheat and what's the chaff. And somehow when something is playing in my head, that's not so easy to do. For instance, I think - well, I have a million problems in my head. When I start writing about them on paper, I see that, no, there is sort of one thing that's really bugging me and I think I'll work on that as opposed to trying to work on a few hundred.

Experiencing Anger

> As embarrassing as this may sound at this point in my life, I'll admit that at one time, I lived in my own soap opera, fantasy world about men. I was too bashful and afraid to really get to know them so I lived out my days somewhere between a blurred reality and fantasy. I was madly in love with this guy in an unspoken, quiet and rather hopeless way for months and months. And one day he went off with my girlfriend. I was very devastated....and furious with my friend and definitely pissed off once I realized how the flames of a dream could be so quickly snuffed out. I was angry at life. Why couldn't I have this dream go on?

Experiencing anger results in part from the previous conditions such as rejection and loneliness. Anger results from the experience of conflict, disappointment and loss. Displeasure and antagonism are directed against the perceived cause such as spouse, room-mate, lover, friend, God, or parent. Anger and frustration may also be directed inward to oneself. One informant describes his own perceived shortcomings and sense of self-reproach:

> I came from a background of rigidly controlling myself, rigidly evaluating, criticizing, judging everything I did very, very strictly. Before Progoff, if I made a mistake, and this could be anything from banging my thumb on a nail with a hammer or forgetting something or making a mess of something, then I would say to myself, "You stupid jerk or dummy. You're always forgetting things or whatever". In fact, I made up paragraph after paragraph of self-condemnation.

Anger against self results in the individual turning inward even more and this reinforces the sense of loneliness and isolation.

Experiencing Anxiety

Experiencing anxiety as a condition of Focusing on Self is both common and pervasive among the informants. Anxiety

involves a kind of uneasiness of mind that revolves around an uncertain event. This may entail apprehension and uneasiness directed at anticipated outcomes and the possibility that the future may entail something negative or undesired. Anxiety may be the result of an experience of emotional loss, threat to one's physical safety/health, vulnerability or exposure of oneself to another, intimacy, or the inability to find meaning to one's existence. Anxiety is not only relevant in situations that are negative but also in circumstances that hold potential for being favorable and growth-oriented. Examples include relocating to a new city, career change, leaving a relationship, or beginning a new relationship.

> Little by little, I found that I liked to be with him and enjoyed being with him, which was quite shocking after being married for twenty-seven years to the same person. I shared lots of it in my journal, especially. It got to be an intimate thing. And, because that was all new to me, it wasn't something that I had someone that I wanted to share it with either. I guess I went there trembling because it was new and unknown and I was unsure of what was happening to me. They (time spent together) were pleasant rather than sad and mixed with a lot of anxiety.

Experiencing Isolation

> The rules and the things we're asked to keep and maintain out here are standards that most people would think were unrealistic, unreasonable, and crazy. Music, for instance, we're not allowed to listen to music. We're not allowed to watch TV. Videos are out of question, movies, even newspapers. They (the church) ask us to stay apart from the world for at least the next two years. We live a very high standard so it isolates us to a certain extent, but I don't mind it.

Experiencing isolation as a condition of Focusing On Self results in part from the conditions previously described. The experience of isolation is also an independent factor. Isolation may be experienced emotionally and socially. Emotional isolation refers to the subjective response to the absence of a "generalized attachment figure rather than a particular other" (Weiss, 1973, p. 75). There is a sense of not being connected to others, lonely, unable to express emotions or important issues, and not having the experience of caring, loving, and sharing intimately. At times, individuals encountering isolation of this kind may be in significant relationships yet these relationships are not perceived as providing what they desire. One woman spoke of her relationship to a man she was involved with:

> I was very unhappy at the time and maybe that (journal) was one way of dealing with my unhappiness and how to overcome without causing too much friction. Maybe that's an escape for me too, a way out from reality and the way things were. He was such a rotten person. I think that's why I did write a lot because I felt peace when I wrote.

Sometimes the fear of making decisions and changing was considered as too big of a risk and thus the decision was made to remain at least temporarily isolated in a relationship while exploring alternative channels to deal with the sense of isolation. Some individuals spoke of sharing with close friends, taking up interest courses to meet people, or becoming more responsible in helping the

relationship grow, while others spoke of turning more inward and remaining frustrated. Emotional isolation also arises out of decisions made in which the individual was aware of the possible emotions that may be encountered. Examples include going on the mission field, leaving a relationship, and beginning to change unwanted habits/behaviors. It is clear that both desired and undesired life events and choices can contribute to experiences of emotional isolation. The sense of isolation may be minimized to some extent in situations where the individual seems self-sufficient, values time spent alone, has attachments or relationships that are meaningful with others, and believes there is a higher purpose for the experiences of isolation.

Social isolation is the sense of being separated from or restricted in the nature and kind of contact with people in general, friends, activities and may be the result of external circumstances such as relocating to another city and being separated geographically from one's social network. It may also stem from being a member of an organization (e.g. religious group) that regulates the social, ethical and moral behavior of its adherents. Social isolation may arise from or lead to emotional isolation. Individuals who may have encountered a significant loss or difficult experience such as domestic violence, separation, death of a loved one may decline the

initiatives by others to socialize in the midst of their difficulties. This can result in temporary isolation at both these levels. However, it is important to note that not all those who do encounter emotional or social isolation regard it as problematic. One informant describes her experience:

> I'm a bit of a hermit and I like to be alone more than others do...I like people and have friends but I don't have to connect once a day or week. I have my ideas of what I'd like in a good friend and comrade. Being rather new in town, I'm more connected to friends far away. So there is a feeling of isolation despite having the phone, post office, and acquaintances here to get to know better...and I write in my journal just to capture the sense of how certain friendships are developing, if I am lonely, and I think too, I tell only a couple of people when I'm down and out. That all seems realistic and acceptable at this point.

Strategy

Turning To Self

> When major events are happening or are about to take place, I begin to get very restless and confused, wondering what the outcome will be, should be or whatever. I can become such a worrier and so my body and mind usually tell me to take time out so that I can collect my thoughts and come through with some decent, acceptable decision or whatever. This is the time that I need to let things sit inside, have a debate with myself. If I don't, I usually end up with more regrets, guilt and crap.

The strategy of Turning To Self is adopted under the conditions described. Strategies refer to the individual's attempts to deal with an issue or problem. This strategy signals the beginning steps taken to sort out a particular event or concern, gain a sense of understanding, and thereby make sense of the experience in question. It

begins here in Stage One and continues throughout the stages in some degree or another. Turning To Self is a strategy that entails focusing on oneself and thus pertains to the ability to experience solitude. This strategy is adopted as a means of coping with one's concerns. These include the fear of risking self, fear of criticism, fear of judgement, or fear of rejection. It also includes the emotional experiences outlined under conditions of Stage One. Turning to Self is associated with solitude or the state of being remote from others to a greater or lesser extent. It means spending time alone to make sense of one's life, to communicate with oneself, and to come to terms with some issue about oneself or oneself in relation to another.

The conditions brought about by change such as insecurity, restlessness, and new awakenings are "the ultimate realities of human existence" and represent a "necessary step to creation, to rebirth, to renewal" (Moustakas, 1967, p. 123-124).

Consequences

A number of consequences stem from the combination of these conditions and strategies. The consequences are as follows:

1. The individual is questioning some aspect of self, other, and/or its relationship to specific circumstances.

2. The conditions continue to exist.
3. There is a reservation, at least temporarily, with regards to interpersonal sharing and disclosing concerns, problems, and struggles.
4. The individual is searching for some kind of understanding and resolution to the situation encountered.

Wanting

> I'm trying to think of what motivated me to start journalling. There was the self-improvement stuff there. Like if I keep track of this, I'll be better able to see how I'm doing, measure my own progress, find ways of improving myself, reminding myself that I can change, develop, grow better and so on.

The meaning of "wanting" is two-fold. First, it means to feel a desire or wish for. Secondly, it implies that something is missing or needed. As a consequence of the conditions of Stage One, there is a lack of close, intimate relationships and stability accompanied by a sense of dissatisfaction with oneself. At this stage, the need for intimacy, stability, and self-satisfaction have not been met. Wanting change is, however, contingent upon freedom which is the "awareness of alternatives and of the ability to choose" (Wheelis, 1973, p. 15). Freedom, in turn, is "contingent upon consciousness and so may be gained or lost, extended or diminished" (Wheelis, 1973, p. 15). Hence, it is conceivable that for some individuals, the achievement of freedom may never occur or having been

achieved, may be lost.

All of the informants spoke of wanting in several ways. There is an awareness of gaps or deficits, both internally (e.g. being too introverted or critical of self) and externally (e.g. lacking a meaningful relationship or not being socially connected). These gaps leave a sense of need for completion, continuity, contentment, and connection. One informant described the growing pains encountered in his journey towards self-improvement:

> In an argument, I always had to win. Well you don't make friends when you treat people like that. So when I got into the Progoff stuff, looking at my own reservoir of feelings means accepting them. I'm willing to experience sadness. I'm willing to trust my inner private secrets to paper. That's somehow made it easier. If you were a friend of mine, the fact that I could disclose on paper meant that it was a little easier to disclose in person. To feel, to risk, to be vulnerable, to be seen as not weaker, indecisive...

The extent to which the individual begins to take steps to contend with the sense of wanting and self-dissatisfaction is dependent upon how others are perceived. If important thoughts and emotions are articulated with difficulty and a trusted other is absent, then turning inward is a likely response. Furthermore, if the individual has a preference for turning inward, it is more likely that private means such as self-reflection through journal writing are utilized. Others are not as certain which way to turn and this results in an exploration of possible sources of personal growth and

change or simply a moratorium of sorts. There is a hold placed on taking the next step and risking.

Fearing

> I think there's an aloneness to a lot of things we do out here. Even the feelings that we have, whether good or bad, a lot of times, the good feelings are brought out and that's what is good about the mission. But the sad parts, the things that personally offend you, or hurt your feelings, you have to stay away from spreading it around...or gossip. You really have to stay away from it. So it fills up inside and what can you really do? Chances are if you go and talk to somebody about it, they're going to give you a lecture on why you shouldn't be that way. And so it's kind of nice you can write it down. The journal is not a person but it's something that you can turn to and express your feelings to without any fear or concern of what might happen.

The conditions of this stage of Focusing On Self bring about an atmosphere that is characterized by fears, uncertainty, vulnerability, and anxiety. Common to all informants in varying degrees was a fear of criticism or judgment, and particularly, a fear of rejection. There are personal and interpersonal dimensions that interact with each other, enhancing the effect of each and contributing to the nature and extent of the fears. First, there are the individual's perceptions of self. These are subjectively experienced as "being a loner", "being shy and quiet", "being socially awkward", and "being fear-bound". These descriptions of self may be attributed to interpersonal relating in the context of one's family of origin or in the context of one's recent experience in a relationship (e.g. marital difficulties or parent/child

conflict). Given these kinds of adverse circumstances the individual has adopted some means of coping. This may involve attempts to relate as well as to not relate to others. Examples include the influence of the family of origin in which the expression of sad or negatively perceived emotions is discouraged and inhibited; growing up in a family atmosphere that is described as critical and dominated by rules of right and wrong; or growing up as an introverted child that often felt like an outsider and stranger.

The informants spoke of their lack of familiarity and sense of permission in expressing themselves to another individual and how this issue played a part in heightening their fears of self-disclosure. The family, then can be viewed as one important source of external constraint whereby the individual growing up learns that opening oneself up to another is risky, unacceptable, or a sign of weakness. External constraints may also be reinforced by values and standards set out by institutions such as the church or workplace. Other fears may vary with the individual's immediate experience or that of the recent past. For example, the experience of rejection or threat of rejection may instill a sense of fear about the potential for further repudiation. There may also be the fear that the situation will be made worse by further disclosing such as several female informants who spoke of

their fear of further abuse by their partners.

Turning to self is a means of coping with the situation at hand. It is also a way of protecting oneself from emotional exposure such as embarrassment, weakness, or one's own anger. In some cases, it is a means of avoiding the possible negative responses of others such as ridicule, rejection, disagreement, or physical harm. The consequence is the development of two different strategies. The first strategy is "turning to self" and is developed in Stage One. "Covering up" is the second strategy which is developed in Stage Two. The conditions of this stage, in combination with the consequence of fear further reinforce the sense of isolation and loneliness.

Reserving

> I know I write in my journal a lot of things that I don't like to tell anybody else. It's just like a deep dark secret. You know if you ever tell anybody your secret, it's no longer a secret. Somebody else knows. They can tell other people so things that I don't really like to talk about, things like that, I write in my journal. I don't write in the exact same terms because even if anybody ever takes my journal and reads through it...I just let those meanings be meanings that only I can understand (secret symbols) and that they are going to be a little bit confused about.

To reserve means to hang on to, keep as one's own or withhold something such as feelings, opinions or information. Disclosure of one's experience is most likely when the other individual is perceived as a trustworthy person of goodwill and who is willing to lend a listening ear as well as understanding. Disclosing oneself to

significant others whose probable reactions are assumed, but not known can be a frightening experience. Put simply, the greater the uncertainty and anxiety about disclosing in a certain relationship, the more likely the individual is to take measures to minimize the possibility of experiencing fear or anxiety. The response to fear and uncertainty is to erect barriers so that one can be protected from the exposure of oneself and to be assuaged from the impact of negative conditions.

In this stage, attempts at reserving occur with varying degrees of flexibility and effectiveness. There is little flexibility in appropriating various adjustment patterns such as moving toward people or moving against people, depending on the presenting conditions. One informant described his tendency to remain at a distance from people:

> Most people have their work and their friends and their families and other things. Of course, I had family and friends. I was married. I had five children and so on and I was married to my work in a way as well. I wasn't interested in sharing myself.

Reserving is minimized when there is a trusted, mutual relationship that is geographically close. This was the case for only two of the informants and this gap in relationship played a significant part in their beginning exploration of journal writing.

Reserving assumes new meaning when there are existing close relationships that constitute a social/emotional network or if the individual chooses the option of being

alone. In this sense, reserving connotes a setting aside for one's own use. The capacity to be alone is regarded as a valuable resource particularly when major life changes have occurred. Often a time of reappraisal of these changes and the accompanying confusion are needed. Reserving then may be reflected in the desire to seek solitude as a means of stepping aside from the pressures and demands that have accompanied the changes. There is a search for an understanding of the situation as well as an exploration of the responses that the individual can choose to make emotionally and physically.

Reserving is a consequence that extends beyond Stage One although its nature and quality may undergo changes over time as it takes on different characteristics. It is important to note that several consequences may be attributed to reserving. First, it accentuates the state of tension, dissatisfaction, and sense of disorganization. There is a facing up to one's reality. A further consequence of reserving is the growing need to begin to understand and to make sense of the situation at hand. One way of exploring these experiences is to remove oneself from present surroundings and see what emerges. This initiative is not without its tensions. This sets the stage for evaluating and appraising oneself and the situation in Stage Two and for continuing to contend with the uncertainty and anxiety.

Given the conditions of this stage and the strategy of reserving, the consequence is further alienating or estrangement of self from oneself and from others. This stems from limiting or avoiding interaction with others who may provide the kind of feedback or support that would enhance self-understanding and personal growth.

Focusing On Self

Focusing on Self, therefore, is characterized by the following: the individual experiences a set of conditions which results in several consequences and a strategy for handling them. The adult, in the context of transition, experiences loneliness and frustration. Confusion, a sense of rejection, and anxiety are also encountered. There is social isolation and emotional isolation. As a result, the individual is in a position of lacking and wanting. There are personal and interpersonal gaps to contend with. The individual engages in the strategy of reserving as a way of self-protection against the onslaught of further negative emotions. Turning inward, self-exploration and an examination of personal circumstances begin. There is a turning inward to discover a means of self-expression, understanding, and personal growth.

STAGE TWO: EXPLORING OPTIONS

Stage Two reflects the continuation of the developmental steps involved in the journal writing process. A detailed discussion of this stage is presented next.

> I was taking psychology courses and of course, it was very much the humanistic stream of psychology at that point in time. I was also taking a philosophy of religion course, a course of Buddhism, Shintuism, religions of Japan...And then I got reading people like some of the humanistic psychologists like Jourard on self-disclosure...and I just really got curious about myself and what was making me tick.

Stage Two is the stage of exploring options. The individual begins to focus inward and takes steps to make sense of personal experiences in the midst of change. This action stems in part from the conditions established in the previous stage. The journal writer-to-be attempts to resolve the need to understand the situation and to find a means of expression that is safe, adequate and non-threatening. The greater the fear of rejection experienced by the individual in expressing emotions or thoughts to another individual, the more likely alternatives to interacting with others are sought. This step minimizes vulnerability and risk.

The informants provided examples of the different channels of self-expression and self-understanding. These included courses in psychology, astrology, and creative writing. Others included: talking to a trusted friend or

significant other, exploring religion, sensitivity workshops, group therapy, journal writing workshops, seeing a counsellor or psychiatrist, reading self-help books, and keeping a journal. The commitment to journal writing and self-improvement occurs by the end of Stage Two. See Table II on the following page for an overview.

The goal of Exploring Options is to contend with the conditions of Stage One. More specifically, the goal is to acquire a sense of self-acceptance and inner contentment by examining significant events, emotional responses, and possible choices that exist. By focusing on one's circumstances and the nature and extent of making important changes in life, the individual is in turn able to acquire a sense of control, meaning in life, and self-improvement. Exploring Options thus becomes an integral part of the individual's attempt to deal with the sense of self-dissatisfaction. May (1969) affirms the importance of healthy living and notes that the healthy human is constantly undergoing change and growth. Thus the pursuit of psychological health entails the examination of self as well as a sense of responsibility and commitment to change.

Conditions

Appraising/Evaluating Self

The potential journal writer takes measures to appraise and evaluate various dimensions of life. The individual defines this as looking inward, gaining a better

perspective, discovering what aspects of self need change, and looking at ways in which life circumstances could be enriched and improved. This step entails some exploration of self in terms of emotional responses to past, present, and/or anticipated events of change. The questions that are asked include: What was/is my reaction? Was the reaction a reflection of how I really felt? How content am I with my reaction and the decisions that followed? Could I have done something differently? What is necessary at present to bring about some of the changes I want?

Appraising self can take several forms. There is an appraisal of one's use of internal and external resources as well as contemplation of changes in attitude or behaviors. The informants referred to their appraisal of certain personality characteristics such as being passive and wanting to become more assertive; being critical and judgmental and deciding to become more accepting of others/self; and being unsociable or alienated from others and desiring friendships and intimacy. May (1953) describes the ability to view the world and to view ourselves viewing as "self-relatedness" which "gives humans the power to stand outside the rigid chain of stimulus and response, to pause, and by this pause to throw some weight on either side, to cast some decision about what the response will be." (p. 161)

Table II

Overview of Stage Two: Exploring Options

Conditions	Strategies	Consequences
appraising/ evaluating	turning to self	getting going
wanting		
mistrusting	covering up	modifying/switching
fearing		
wanting to remember		
being curious		

One informant described the importance of appraising herself and to improve herself in general.

> Some of the things I write in my journal are a bad day, the feeling I had during the day and maybe why I felt that way or what brought the ending on. You can look back on it and think, maybe if I get into the same situation again, I can improve the way things happen and make the outcome better. You can also set yourself some goals and write them in your journal and then you've got a record of them because you decided you wanted to make those goals. And you can come back and say, "Hey, I made these goals, how did I make out? Did I really do things to help me get those goals? Where did I go wrong that I didn't attain that goal?"

Another form of evaluating/appraising involves a close examination of the concern at hand. This involves identifying the issue(s), determining the degree and extent to which the issue is problematic for oneself or one's relationships with others, and sorting out how the issue

may be ameliorated or dealt with. One individual noted his use of journal writing to examine a conflict he had with another individual and the awareness he gained as a result:

> When I wrote it down, I wrote down my tensions about it and just as I was writing, I realized that I really was at fault too. I thought I was just totally out of it. I was doing no wrong. But I realized that I had as big a part in it as he did. It helped me realize that I was wrong and in a way my journal helped me.

As noted earlier, the informants explored several options in search of understanding and self-improvement. In addition to internal resources, the participants explored the feasibility of external resources. For one individual this exploration period involved participation in a class for creative writing which facilitated reflection on her family of origin and her unhappy marriage. Later, some of her insights and new learning were shared with a group of close friends. For another informant, the Progoff journal writing workshop enabled uncomfortable emotions to be disclosed in the journal and eventually with others. This time of exploration for the individual also included the use of self-help books and personal as well as group therapy. For most of the informants, a significant, intimate relationship was lacking.

In examining oneself, there is a tendency to compare one's understanding of the present self to what one regards as more acceptable and ideal. The journal writer-to-be

recognizes that there is room for improvement. Exploring Options therefore includes taking a look at what improvement might entail and how this task could be accomplished.

The notion of an existing difference between the real self and the ideal self is addressed by Karen Horney (1950). The real self includes those aspects that are true about us at any particular time. The ideal self, on the other hand, reflects what we would like to become. So, the question at hand is, given where I am now and what I am now, where can I reasonably hope to be in the future? The ability to realistically appraise a situation and determine adjustments to it is an important attribute of a healthy adult. This journey is often a contrast from the past.

> Even in school, status- that was what I liked. I think I kind of thrived off it. This is just explaining a little about myself. I was the captain of our football team. I was a track captain. I was student body vice-president. I was vice-president of student politics...doing all those sorts of things. I thrived off it. I liked being in the spotlight and I liked people to know my name. I never really thought I was better than them but I liked to associate with my friends because I really felt that was what would give me my status. When I got on my mission, I found out that was kind of stupid. It didn't get me anywhere. It gave me a lot of attributes that I liked such as leadership experience. But the humility part- to be humble. I found that was more important.

The effect of exploring options is that the individual can begin to take action, which means assuming a sense of control in one's life.

Wanting

One of the main concerns of the journal writer at this stage is self-improvement. This is expressed as a need as well as a desire. To improve oneself is defined by the individuals as not continuing to repeat past failings, to be happier with life circumstances, to share oneself with others, to develop more self-awareness, to become a better person, to re-parent oneself, and to engage in a personal journey of growth.

> I wanted to become a better journal writer. I'm not sure what that means...just to do more of what I was doing to explore and work with and deal with self-development. I wanted the journal to be more involved with my internal life. I saw it as helping me to be a better person, to develop more awareness of myself. What an incredibly better way to do something about self-development through personal journal writing than to have somebody else do it, somebody else lead me.

Another individual spoke of the excitement and desire for growth that self-exploration through journal writing may entail.

> I think at first there was excitement of discovering that some people were really interested in these ideas and I thought they were really interesting- the idea of personal journey, personal growth, philosophy. I'd been introduced to this exciting new world. It made sense to me. The questions about myself and about the world just started coming. It seemed like I had opened a can of worms.

There are risks in making changes. On the one hand, this initiative may lead to relief, contentment, and enhanced confidence as new habits, attitudes, or relationships are cultivated. On the other, exploring

unknown terrain in the pursuit of new possibilities and change may initially or temporarily result in isolation/rejection from others, confusion, and anxiety. Storr (1989) describes these possibilities as follows:

> Any form of new organization or integration within the mind has to be preceded by some degree of disorganization. No one can tell, unless he has experienced it, whether or not this necessary disruption of former patterns will be succeeded by something better. (p. 35)

Wanting Privacy

> At one point I struggled with, you know, writing absolutely everything I thought in my journal. I was afraid of writing some things or acknowledging some things to myself. So, I made a rule and I don't know when it was. It probably was several years later that whatever went into my journal was absolutely private and I'd never show it to anyone. That gave me the freedom gradually to write more and more things that I probably wouldn't admit to anyone else, kind of the darker side of myself. And that was very significant because it gave me a little more freedom to write down whatever I wanted to.

The desire for privacy and being alone is perceived by the individuals as a period of time where they can think and reflect on their concerns, examine alternative ways of looking at and dealing with certain situations, and allow themselves the time and space to gain clarity and confidence. Wanting privacy may stem from the individual's perception of the issue being too personal, confusing, or embarrassing. For example, the desire for privacy may stem from the lack of confidence or social skills to articulate one's innermost thoughts to another person. Being alone to write with privacy takes place in a safe and protected

environment. These characteristics are of primary importance throughout the following stages and provide a context for the journal writer to begin and maintain the goals of attaining self-satisfaction and personal growth.

There may also be concerns that others are not available or prepared to help. One woman, for example, had a number of close friends with whom she spent time socializing but she did not choose to express her loneliness and lack of intimacy in her life with them. She perceived her friends as being busy with their own responsibilities and relationships.

The need for privacy may be short-lived and intermittent, particularly in situations where the individual is involved with one or more significant others who are regarded as understanding, helpful, and caring. In this case, the journal may be used in conjunction with contacts with a therapist, friend, or connections are made with others in a group context such as a course, workshop, or therapy group where self-disclosure is possible.

The nature and extent of wanting privacy varied among the individuals although all of the informants made reference to the importance of spending time alone "to reflect", "get it all out", "sort out", or "gain perspective" on their situation. The effect of wanting privacy is that the individual is able to focus on issues with fewer inhibitions and without the scrutiny of others'

opinions and reactions. The effect of experiencing privacy is that the individual can engage in self-examination in an atmosphere of security and freedom.

Mistrusting

> I did not trust my feelings. In fact, I guess that's the way to say that. If I got too much into my negative side I would get so depressed that I didn't even want to carry on. It was just total despair. If I got into my joy too much, I figured I would become irresponsible, quit work, and go sit in a cabin in the mountains and enjoy life. Things were sort of in their extreme form. If I let myself have my feelings, or I'll die of despair or I'll run away and be irresponsible or I'll do something that's not going to be quite right. So, there was always a kind of strait jacket on the feelings.

To mistrust is to regard someone or something with suspicion or doubt. Mistrust in this stage occurs at two basic levels. First, there is a mistrust of one's own emotions, particularly if confronted with the decision of sharing them with others. Second, there is confusion as to who one really is, what one wants to do in the given life situation and insecurity with respect to personal weaknesses. As a consequence there is a tendency to regard oneself in anegative light and to be critical about these perceived flaws. Given this picture, it is not surprising that emotions are inhibited and there is a guard against being vulnerable. Examples also include decision making around issues of letting go/staying in a relationship; expressing anger or sadness/covering up with a facade of happiness; and being overcritical of self/accepting self.

Fearing

> It never was even a consideration that I would disclose to another person that I had something like a death wish...a death wish for myself to put an end to the self-loathing I felt then. I thought I was weird as I felt like a loser and I also didn't know anybody my age (15) who had thoughts like mine. So, I was afraid of thinking in this way, scared that wishing bad things might really bring bad luck...I was afraid someone would find out about me, terrified that the thoughts would keep on coming, and sort of numb because I was so unhappy with my life and its insignificance. I was depressed. That's the note on which my journal began.

A number of the fears described in Stage One continue to be experienced in this stage. In this stage the fears include the fear of rejection, criticism, and being known. With recent rejection or longstanding rejection, the fear of risking is greater. The main concern here revolves around the question, I'm afraid, why take more risks? There is a holding back of emotions from others particularly if further rejection, anger, or criticism are potential consequences. Interpersonal sharing holds the possibility of these consequences. Thus the individual's caution against further rejection is understandable. The assumption is that if one does not open up then there is no possibility of getting hurt. At this stage, inner security and freedom are being sought by being alone and turning inward to begin exploring.

Wanting To Remember

> My journal is my memory in some sense because there's lots of things in there that I've long forgotten. And going back just glancing at them again...like when I first met my wife, my reactions to that, my first encounter, being wildly in love and things like that

> that become part of life and you forget them. But my journal has a lot of those details. It captures and records parts of my life that I no longer remember very clearly.

Stage Two involves the exploration of options that are available as a means of self-understanding and personal growth. At the same time, there is a desire to recapture or store in memory significant thoughts, emotions, and experiences. The desire to recall and recollect experiences through journal writing serves several purposes: (1) to be able to retrieve details of past experiences easily. These details include those which the memory may not be as capable of capturing; (2) to make comparisons on how personal issues, attitudes, and steps towards self-improvement have taken place over time; and to gain some perspective of the issues and areas of growth that still need attention. In this way, the journal is perceived as a way in which the sense of personal history and continuity can be preserved.

Wanting to Remember is a condition that continues to play a crucial part in the maintenance of journal writing in the stages that follow. Whether the remembering involves capturing the details of growth, progress, and resolution or documenting the experiences of disappointment or stagnation, having the journal as a book of concrete, visible recordings serves as an important aspect in motivating the individual to write. The journal is a

preserver of memories, a marker of growth and a reminder of the need to continue taking the initiative toward self-improvement as reflected in the comments made by one participant:

> There are other times when I write just because, well my son got married this summer. And well, I really want to go back and look at it later and see how I felt. I had such mixed feelings, and so I wasn't feeling stuck so much. I just wanted to make sure I recorded the event. So, there's the kind of historical thing. I want to make sure I don't forget all the events in my life. But the other part of it is I'm somehow stuck there and this is a way for me to become unstuck if I start listening to myself.

Being Curious

> I'm curious. I think that's one thing that has been really strong in me for a long time. My curiosity is largely focused around people and what makes people tick, what makes me tick. Philosophical kinds of questions like, what's the meaning of life? I wouldn't say I'm a philosopher but I guess I'm as much of a philosopher as anyone in the sense of being concerned with existential issues...I've always been curious in exploring.

Along with the conditions of rejection, loneliness, and isolation, there is an accompanying desire to change which is partially prompted by a sense of curiosity and interest in seeking alternative ways of relating and living in general. Being curious reflects an eagerness for knowledge of self and others. There is a curiosity about understanding the situations at hand, discovering meaning of circumstances, and exploring ways in which changes in behavior, attitude, and relationships can be made. The ways in which individuals envisioned themselves changing varied to some extent although each addressed their

interest in finding how they could be different and better off in some way in comparison to their present circumstances. One individual spoke of her curiosity in turning inward and and learning to listen to herself as opposed to relying on external opinions. Others expressed a desire to discover how to risk with relationships and what it would be like to be connected emotionally and socially with others. Several mentioned their interest in finding ways to generate meaning in their lives by understanding the specific adversities they encountered. Maslow (1970) describes this kind of individual as being motivated by an unsatisfied hunger for contact, intimacy, belonging, as well as the need to overcome feelings of alienation, strangeness, loneliness, and aloneness.

The conditions of this stage combined with the sense of curiosity paves the way for the strategy of Turning to Self to be used. There is a desire for self-focusing and change. At the same time, there are fears that hold the individual back from sharing with others.

Strategies

Turning To Self

> I remember I became friends with an older girl from camp one summer and we wrote weekly for several years. It all ended suddenly. I never heard from her again and I felt like I lost an ideal mother figure or something like that. It hurt. I didn't want to have that kind of thing happen again so I kept to myself. I also didn't want to burden anyone again. So, I turned to my journal friend, Camilla. It sounds silly now but I wrote to a Camilla in my journal. It was like having a conversation with a friend, even though in reality it

> wasn't. It was talking to an imaginary friend. It was safe and that felt good.

Turning to Self as a strategy to maintain distance from others and to avoid further risking and rejection was previously discussed in Stage One. By turning to self, there is a diminished risk of being judged by others, being in a position of displaying emotions that reveal vulnerability, and becoming more confused, embarrassed or anxious by having to contend with the advice/opinions of others. This strategy continues to be an important one in this stage as the individual chooses journal writing as a way of protecting self and enabling self-exploration. This strategy results from the conditions of this stage. Turning to Self is seen as an important strategy that will contribute to the decision to interact with oneself and often with others in the journal writing.

Turning to Self means that one is in some ways gaining a sense of control. There is a perception of control over others when they are not informed of what is happening. If others are unaware of what emotions or experiences are of significance to the individual, there is less to lose. Inadequacies and negative perceptions of self, therefore, cannot be revealed. Examples of Turning to Self include hiding emotions of hurt and rejection from a new partner in case the relationship fails, presenting a facade of contentment and self-reliance to others in the absence of a

significant relationship, and being quiet and reserved when loneliness pervades. In these circumstances, the journal becomes the place where intimate conversations with one's inner life are captured; it is also the holder of thoughts, emotions, significant experiences and important memories.

Turning to Self is a strategy that reinforces the experience of isolation. If one can not or will not relate to others, then spending time alone becomes a reality. However, there are tradeoffs to being alone in this way. These tradeoffs make journal writing and turning inward worthwhile. One of the main benefits is that of personal freedom in terms of the nature and extent to which certain issues or concerns are dealt with. In other words, the journal writer is able to set the pace in attempting to sort out issues and to discover how self-dissatisfaction can be handled. Choices can be made to explore more intensively, postpone looking deeper within or deal with the past, present, or future. The focus on one's inner life becomes a way of attending to self. For all the individuals involved, journal writing represented a time in which they learned to deal with aspects of their personal life in different ways and in more depth.

Turning to Self as a strategy also serves to diminish some of the loneliness and isolation that is experienced. Such gains were expressed as being able to "get it all out," "feeling safe," "sorting things out," "gaining

perspective," and "finding relief." One is more certain of being able to discover what is really needed or desired, irrespective of what others' expectations are. The potential that being alone holds is underscored by Storr (1988) as he states: "The capacity to be alone thus becomes linked with self-discovery and self-realization; with becoming aware of one's deepest needs, feelings, and impulses" (p. 21). One informant who had encountered difficulties in social relationships and friendships had this to say about his new learning:

> What the Progoff journal and group therapy does is it allows me to venture down the well, into the darkness and to feel safe, safe to face despair. What are you, despair, trying to teach me?

At this point, consideration is made of other options involving limited or minimal self-disclosure. For these individuals the options consisted of daily affirmation books, how-to books on journal writing, self-help books, and journal writing workshops. The focus of exploring these resources was to acquire new techniques in journal writing that would lead to new ways in which improvement could be effected in general.

Covering Up

> I think I lived my life primarily without feelings. Of course, we all have feelings. But I lived mainly in my head. I was a scholarly, bookish kind of person. I used my intelligence. I applied it to problems. I didn't allow emotional content. I was rational, objective, and critical. The kind of language that some people use is that I operated out of my head, not my heart. So, pre-Progoff, I was not expressing very much in the way of feelings either on paper, which is

> fine, or in person. If you and I had had a conversation like this ten years ago, I wouldn't even be saying any of this. First of all, it'd be none of your business. Secondly, if we were talking about it, I'd make sure that I was very guarded and gave you only headstuff. I'd never admit that there were tears or fears.

The pervading sense of self-dissatisfaction coupled with the experiences of loneliness, rejection, or isolation contribute to the development of the strategy of Covering Up. To cover up means to protect or conceal. As alluded to earlier, the conditions of this stage and the previous stage result in the fear of further rejection or criticism, hence the effort is made to reserve one's thoughts or emotions. Covering Up involves concealing what one regards as negative, weak, or inadequate about oneself. Examples of covering up include loneliness, lack of close friends, and lack of intimacy in certain situations such as on the job. Only the characteristics that reflect competence, strength, and a positive image are shown to others. In the case of one individual, time was devoted to demonstrating professional competence to colleagues and taking pride in being a "workaholic".

The strategy of Covering Up can also be one that is a way of living in which very little is revealed. One individual who began journal writing as a way of gradually opening up to others had this to say:

> I had a few friends but even they were treated by others as sort of social rejects which I was aware of. So I didn't really let them in my life because I didn't think I had much to offer them and I wasn't sure that

> they had much to offer me. So, I didn't really give myself or them a chance but I went along and did things with them. They liked me as I presented myself as agreeable, cheerful - a good sport even though inside I felt I didn't belong and had no other place to go.

Covering Up may be expressed in a variety of ways such as making excuses to not socialize or to not get more involved in relationships, being critical and aloof, being painfully shy and awkward or in a slightly more acceptable way, creating an impression of oneself as pleasant, helpful, smart, hardworking but superficial. Having to win arguments and proving one's intellectual abilities may also keep others at arm's length:

> Before if you asked me a question that I wasn't sure of, I'd have to go out and give you a whole bunch of academic answers and make sure you knew I was smart and knew what I was talking about...Before I always felt I couldn't be seen as not knowing something. I had to be right all the time. In an argument I always had to win. Well, you don't make friends when you treat people like that.

This strategy provides a protection against the onslaught of further discomfort and risks. This strategy is used in situations where the individual identifies with negative qualities such as being too serious, judgmental, unworthy or insecure. It also includes instances in which the individual is uncertain about what is being covered up. There is fear that others will discover something undesirable about the real self. The most practical thing to do then is to avoid getting close to others and build an emotional and social wall as a buffer. Horney (1945)

refers to the "detached" type of person in the following description:

> What is crucial is their inner need to put emotional distance between themselves and others. More accurately, it is their conscious and unconscious determination not to get emotionally involved with others in any way, whether in love, fight, cooperation, or completion. They draw around themselves a kind of magic circle which no one may penetrate. (p. 75)

Consequences

In this stage, the conditions, contexts, strategies, and consequences culminate in a pervasive sense of dissatisfaction and uncertainty. Being in transition and wanting to better oneself contribute to the consequence of Getting Going, which in turn serves as an important stepping stone to the move into Stage Three.

Getting Going

Typically a trigger or critical incident is involved in the individual's shift from contemplating what to do to active exploration of self and decision-making. The triggers are often an intricate link of external (e.g. events, others' opinions) and internal (reactions, ideas, beliefs) input. The following example illustrates the intricacy of Getting Going, which involves an interpersonal dimension:

> I mostly went to it (journal workshop) because this friend and I had promised each other to spend a day together and so we decided that the journal keeping workshop would be our vehicle for spending a couple days together. It had nothing to do with the journal keeping although I had wanted to do it for years. It had to do with the fact that this friend and I were actually doing what we wanted to do which was to devote

a little time to our friendship.

Journal writing may be initiated before, during, or after exploring avenues of self-understanding and personal growth such as sensitivity groups, astrology courses, books or personal/group therapy. Triggers may be found in these sources of self-exploration as was the experience of one individual:

> When I first started doing this writing and self-improvement and things like that, I had taken three astrology courses. One of the things that you become aware of is that by doing your chart and putting all your family - if you did them on transparent paper and put everybody's chart on top of each other, you can see why you lived together as a family. That's one way of becoming self-aware of maybe some problems, some things you have to work on and within your own family, It was that that was the original spark that said, "Oh with such and such a person in your family, this is what you've got to work out".

Getting Going may also occur after a specific event. Most of the individuals were able to attribute the beginning of their journal writing to a situation that was perceived as unusual, unexpected, or traumatic. Examples include living alone in a new city, loss of a significant other through separation or death, domestic conflict, or beginning a new relationship. In the midst of a relationship marked by physical threats and accusations, one participant used the journal to express her anger and confusion:

> I think originally, it was just to help me over a troublesome period. I think that was when I first started. I was angry, didn't have anyone to share it with. I can remember just taking a notebook and writing in it, writing how I felt and describing the

> situation which had to do with my husband leaving the house when we had lots of small children and I was really angry at him. Then, when I went to write it out, it was like, I'm writing this angry stuff and I remember, "Oh yeah, but you're supposed to be working on this. You're supposed to be improving yourself".

Getting Going involves the desire to use the journal to make important changes and to discover a greater sense of satisfaction in life and with oneself. At this point, the individual is also exploring how to make the journal work. The individuals are also exploring various options of self-expression within the context of journal writing itself. The individuals spoke of wanting to learn to journal the "right" way, acknowledging that they did not "do it the way you're supposed to", or in the way that the journal was intended to be used. There is some uncertainty as to what is comfortable and effective for them in journal writing. Some experimented with writing daily, while others wrote more sporadically whenever the "urge hit", and others used a more structured method that was taught in books or courses.

Another characteristic of this beginning stage of journal writing is the tendency to write about negative and unwanted experiences almost to the exclusion of the events and emotions that may be refreshing and positive. All of the participants made reference to negative circumstances that contributed in some way to Getting Going in their writing. One informant shared about her beginnings in

journal writing and the tendency to express only certain themes such as rejection or difficulties in relationships:

> I don't think I was very regular in those days - probably I'd go six months without writing anything. Probably the frequency could be determined by disappointed relationships. I sort of went back to it periodically in those early years of marriage but it was very fleeting.

Getting Going means to begin to take steps of action. It implies going beyond just thinking, dreaming, reflecting, and wanting to change. For the journal writer this involves opening oneself up in the journal and approaching real, imagined, or anticipated experiences in the past, present, and future.

Modifying

Throughout this stage of Exploring Options, there has been an accompanied sense of non-commitment on the journal writer's part with respect to using journal writing as an important tool in personal growth. Up to this point, time has been spent searching and examining a variety of strategies that would be of help. Exploring thus precedes the act of becoming committed to journal writing. To commit means to devote oneself unreservedly to something or someone. It is not possible to commit oneself to the goal of self-satisfaction if the need to identify the concerns exists first or if there is uncertainty as to how to include the journal in the process of learning and discovery.

Exploring Options within journal writing is an important aspect of modifying. There is often a digression from the initial way of journal writing. New and helpful ideas are added from other sources such as how-to books on journal writing, psychology books, or religion. For some individuals, modifying the use of the journal meant a redefinition of their approach to writing. There was the perception that the initial writing attempts that were concrete and factual in nature were in essence diary writing, not journal writing. These individuals tended to become adherents of Progoff's structured method and were in agreement with his view that the "spontaneous keeping of journals in historical and contemporary times is marked by a self-curtailing effect" (Progoff, 1975, p. 24). In exploring the method as taught in the workshop setting, there was the opinion that the new experience of self-expression was much richer and more complete. For others who had written spontaneously and then learned a new method such as the Progoff method of writing, there was a decision to incorporate some but not all of the ideas as the method as a whole was perceived as "horribly complicated", "cumbersome", "excessive", "obsessive", or "unnecessary".

The result of modifying is that the individual is able to establish the ways in which journal writing is and will be relevant in a personal way. Modifying plays an

important part as it secures the individual's interest and commitment to journal writing. The more meaningful and relevant the journal writing process is to the individual, the more likely that an investment will be made in written expression throughout the next stage. In this way, modifying paves the way for the entry into and the expansion of options for self-exploration and change in Stage Three.

STAGE THREE

COMPOSTING: THE CULTIVATION OF EXPERIENCE

The structuring of Stage Three reflected the ongoing changes or process involved in the search for self-satisfaction. The movement over time captured by Stage Three was labelled Composting: The Cultivation of Experience. The following section will address this stage in more detail.

> It takes a while for our experience to sift through our consciousness. For instance, it is hard to write about being in love in the midst of a mad love affair. We have no perspective. All we can say is, "I'm madly in love," over and over again. It is also hard to write about a city we just moved to; it's not yet in our body. We don't know our new home, even if we can drive to the drugstore without getting lost. We have not lived through three winters there or seen the ducks leave in the fall and return to the lakes in spring...
>
> Our senses by themselves are dumb. They take in experience, but they need the richness of sifting for a while through our consciousness and through our whole bodies. I call this "composting". Our bodies are garbage heaps: we collect experience, and from the decomposition of the thrown-out eggshells, spinach leaves, coffee grinds, and old steak bones of our minds come nitrogen, heat, and very fertile soil. Out of this fertile soil bloom our poems and stories. But

> this does not come all at once. It takes time. Continue to turn over and over the organic details of your life until some of them fall through the garbage of discursive thoughts to the solid ground of black soil (Goldberg, 1986, p. 14).

Stage Three is the stage of Composting: The Cultivation of Experience. "Composting" and "cultivation" are gardening terms that have relevance for the journal writing process. Composting is central to organic gardening and represents an imitation of nature's way to rebuild the soil by encouraging the decomposition of natural plant particles (Gerras, 1972, p. 45). It is a means by which waste materials such as vegetable parings, leaves, grass clippings, coffee grounds, and other vegetable matter can be turned into a rich dark humus. Viewed as an "intensified version of the process of death and rebuilding which is going on almost everywhere in nature", the compost heap is both a healing agent for the soil's wounds as well as a symbol of continuing life (Gerras, 1972, p. 45).

> I go to group therapy which I never would have done historically because of my false belief that only weak people go to therapy. Previous to Progoff (journal writing method) I would never have gone to group therapy because I would have felt, "it's none of their business". Why would I go to a group, reveal my weaknesses and cry? Having worked with Progoff, I guess what I came to realize is why I wouldn't reveal myself. It finally dawned on me that when I'm working with the Progoff stuff, then when I'm more open with my journal, I'm more open with you, a friend of mine and we're closer as a result of me revealing myself, not more distant. If it's safe with a developed friend in the Progoff journal, well then maybe it's safe with real people. So it was an evolution and then if I'm safe with real people who are friends, who will keep things confidential and so on, well I guess I could go to group therapy because perhaps that would help

improve myself.

In this stage, the process of journal writing involves the accumulation and exploration (turning over) of significant experiences and emotions. Life experiences extend an invitation to the individual to let in new information and create new concepts and understanding are gained.

Table III: Overview of Stage Three
Composting: The Cultivation of Experience

Contexts	Conditions	Strategies	Consequences
intrapersonal solitude	getting going wanting change autonomy in self-expression opening self	shifting time creative self-expression reviewing journal	finding a resort balancing gaining perspective accounting for personal change

Connections can be drawn between the frequent turning, fluffing, and watering that are necessary in hastening decomposition and the journal writing process as it requires the continued work with the raw matter of thoughts, emotions, and experiences. This work leads to understanding, healing, and personal growth.

"Cultivating" means to make fit for raising crops, as by plowing, fertilizing, or tilling. It involves caring and tending for plants or soil to promote growth and

abundance. The activity of cultivating the soil is an important part of the plant's environment. Healthy soil provides an anchorage for plants as well as a reservoir of needed moisture and nutrients. Cultivating implies looking into consequences, since people cultivate in anticipation of consequences (Glaser, 1978). Seldom does a gardener begin with ideal soil. Nearly any soil can be improved. With proper management and knowledge of how best to cultivate, fertile conditions can be created and maximized. Similarly, improvements and growth in an individual's life can be achieved given a safe and supportive internal/external environment. In the context of journal writing, cultivating involves the individual's efforts to attend to and work on personal concerns. Important decisions are contemplated and initiated. It is essential "to nurture the soils in which important ideas have taken root" (Napier, 1990, p. 12). Otherwise, the best of intentions remain only intentions.

Stage Three has the same features of Stage One and Stage Two. Stage Three is a result of Stage One, Focusing On Self and Stage Two, Exploring Options. The goals of self-improvement and understanding are actively pursued in this stage. These goals are accompanied by the desire to achieve self-acceptance. There is a perceived need and desire for mastery and control. The consequence of "getting going" in Stage Two becomes a condition for Stage

Three. The journal writer enters Stage Three with an awareness of the possible benefits of writing, privacy, a sense of safety, and freedom of expression.

The previous strategies of Turning To Self and Covering Up remain. Exploring Options continues throughout this stage but is qualitatively different. Emphasis is placed on finding ways to deal with personal issues. Other options may continue to be used such as creative writing courses, writing workshops, spirituality, friendships, and formal counselling. All of the individuals regarded one or more of these choices as important to them. However, there was often more intimate sharing in the journal than with other people. Several individuals commented that in addition to journalling for their own sake, it was valuable to keep a journal to enable their children and future generations to learn from their successes and the steps taken to resolve struggles or failures.

Stage Three is also characterized by variation in the length of time spent in this stage. Some of the factors that influenced the variation were: the nature and extent of issues in need of work, the amount of emotional pain experienced in dealing with the issue(s), and the writer's readiness to explore alternatives. The individuals who continued with writing noted the gains or benefits to include: being able to release emotions and experience relief; becoming clearer about an issue; and focusing on

new and healthier behaviors, attitudes or emotions. The more the individual perceived journal writing favorably, the greater the commitment to continued writing. The presence of certain conditions, contexts, strategies, and consequences enable the cultivation of experience.

Conditions

In this stage, Getting Going involves the individual's focus on the personal issues. Getting Going also means becoming goal-oriented. These goals are general, such as wanting to express oneself or becoming less superficial. The goals also include specific ones such as dealing with the death of a parent or the possibility of losing a significant relationship. Typically there are negatively perceived circumstances which compell the individual to find a resolution. The idea of Getting Going was presented in the previous stage and will be briefly addressed here as a condition of Stage III.

Getting Going

> When I was confused, when I was down and discouraged, didn't know which direction to go or how to make sense of something in a relationship or something in my personal life, I could go to my journal and write about it and kind of explore the pros and cons and express the feelings I was having and try and sort it out. I guess the process of writing helped to give me clarity and even when I was confused, I gradually learned about my own process in that if I was confused, I could go and write about the confusion. Through that I usually came to some resolution.

As alluded to earlier, there is a more acute awareness of the desire to examine, understand, and deal with one's

circumstances through journal writing. Getting Going is prompted and maintained by the desire to come to terms with the issue.

Wanting Change

This condition is a consequence of Stage Two. The difference is that there is initiative and action taken by the individual in the hope of achieving change. In this stage, Wanting Change is linked with the condition of Getting Going. Once disappointments, discouragement, and regrets are brought to the forefront, the possiblity of changing for the better is contemplated. This becomes the driving force behind the attempt to "make it happen".

> What the Progoff journal and group therapy does is it allows me to venture down the well into the darkness and to feel safe, safe to face despair. What are you, despair trying to teach me? What is it you have to say to me? Rather than, "Oh my God, now what do I do?", Progoff introduced me to that idea and then it was reinforced by a psychologist that I visited. He'd say, "well, touch it (despair), talk with it, ask it what it wants". These two processes were working together and that started a process of opening myself up.

Autonomy In Self-Expression

> It's a friend that just listens..is willing to listen to anything I say. He's not going to criticize me for what I write down. He's not going to hold it against me and he's not going to bring it up at a later time and use it to thwart me I guess.

To be autonomous is to be independent, self-governing or self-determining. Maintaining a journal is reinforced by the freedom to bring out whatever experiences one chooses. Only the individual writer can scrutinize what

has been written. Being autonomous means the content as well as the process of writing are within one's control. External limitations are minimized in terms of who, what, how, why, and when to write. The effect of this autonomy of self-expression is that writing can take place apart from the judgment, criticism or reactions of others. Examples from the informants included: the freedom to capture sexual dreams/fantasies; express hopes and dreams that are too personal to disclose to others; and deal with difficult emotions.

The strategy of Covering Up continues to be used to protect oneself from being vulnerable. At times, the autonomy in self-expression means that minimal writing or no writing takes place at all. Several informants commented on their experience of having their privacy violated by others who read their journal without their permission. In these situations where the possibility of rejection, shame, or conflict existed, symbols, vague language or a personal form of shorthand was used as means of self-protection. Some chose to be more selective about the content of material in the journal, while others did not write at all for a period of time.

Autonomy of self-expression is also reflected in the steps taken in breaking away from negative, habitual patterns. Several informants noted that through journal writing, they began to exercise a non-judgmental approach

towards themselves. This was a novel experience for them. Autonomy in self-expression was not attributed directly to the journal, but rather the perception of how the journal was a medium for exploration and expression. One informant attested to the liberating aspect of journal writing in the following comment:

> When I got into it, I realized the incredible value to me of his (Progoff's) non-judgmental approach, the fact that you can shut off your judge, let yourself have your feelings and your thoughts, your images, and so on. I came from a background of rigidly controlling myself, rigidly evaluating, criticizing, judging everything I did very strictly. My older journals were very self-critical. Now that I work in the Progoff journal I am more gentle with myself and as a result of that I am gentler with others.

Opening The Self

> The idea that my life is a gift to anybody, let alone to me is just one of these turning points that you get in your life. That's a nonjudgmental statement-doesn't matter how you failed or how sad you are or have not achieved what you wanted to achieve. Your life is unfolding and it's a gift to yourself and to others. So, I began to think of my life in more of an Eastern way. I was a workholic. Work was my life. I now understand that by working so hard I was avoiding the question of meaning in my life. If I kept busy, I could avoid my real work, making my own personal meaning for life...So, I began to look at myself and my life without being so afraid of what I'd find. Instead of being so terrified of what I would find, I'd say, "Hm, what would I find?

Opening the self is a condition of composting and the cultivation of experience. This condition refers to the journal writer's willingness to explore and embrace new ideas and experiences. Opening self also refers to the acknowledgment of the differences that exist between the

real self and the idealized self and a growing acceptance of what one could realistically aspire to become as opposed to what one should become, in some unrealistic and unattainable way. This condition involves taking steps to look inside oneself and to take risks for the sake of personal growth and self-improvement. Both personal limitations as well as potentials and resources are examined in journal writing.

As the journal writer becomes more open to addressing personal concerns, there is a concommitant effect of including the interpersonal dimension. This effect is evident in the individual's willingness to connect with those who may be understanding and supportive. On the other hand, there is an increasing awareness of relationships that are in need of change. Opening self also refers to the steps taken by the individual to deal with negative or difficult situations such as confronting someone, accepting the limitations or rejection by a significant other, and terminating an unsatisfactory relationship. By working in the journal and rehearsing the desired changes in relationships with others, possibilities may become reality.

Context

Being In Solitude

> I know that if I'm stuck on something, then I can use it as a tool to explore and get through whatever it is that I'm stuck with. It's one of the many ways of

> doing it but it does work for me. One of the questions that I'd ask myself is, What is the situation? So I'd write about it. What is it about the situation that is really bugging me? How am I feeling about it? How does it relate to the ways I've been in the past? What is it bringing up for me? What are some ways that I could work around this? What course of action am I going to take? Where would I like to see this go in the future? What else can I relate it to in my life? So, those are the kinds of questions that would run through my mind as I write, one from the other.

The previous contexts of being in transition and being in the intrapersonal context were highlighted. To some degree the writer's role was that of the recipient, rather than the agent, of change. The focus was on introspection and contemplation rather than action. In this stage, being in transition and being in an intrapersonal context take on new forms, thus bringing different meanings for the journal writer.

Put simply, journal writing is a solitary activity. You can share your journal with others, but essentially the writing process occurs in the absence of others. Since the solitude of journal writing is "for ourselves alone and the entries are for our own scrutiny, we are the only judge of whether any particular entry we have made..is complete and truthful" (Progoff, 1975, 142). Initiatives are taken to create favorable transitions from circumstances that have been perplexing, frustrating, or confusing.

The amount of time spent alone with the journal varied among individuals and was influenced by the kind of change/transition experienced, the sense of familiarity

with problem-solving and contemplation, the availability of and comfort with interpersonal contacts, and the sense of personal value placed on being alone.

The context of being in solitude sets the stage for the writer to interact with and cultivate a relationship with the inner self with experiences, and with others. Journal writing is relational as the individual is dealing with different aspects of self in the past, present and future on the levels of the personal, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. Furthermore, being in solitude facilitates the exploration of the physical, emotional and social realms of the individual in the absence of others' demands and expectations. As Progoff (1975) states:

> A human being begins his life as a seed of possibility, and these possibilities are unfolded, frustrated, transformed in the midst of the varied circumstances of his life. Out of the composite of our experiences and relationships in contact with our environment, we each build our unique life history. (p. 42)

The informants provided accounts of how spending time alone with their journal fostered new attitudes and ways of dealing with writing blocks, self-criticism, loneliness, and passivity. One individual who described her journal writing process as akin to self-hypnosis had this to say:

> I am a person who has had chronic pain for quite a few years now, since 1984. I do use the journal work on that. It's quite a difficult thing to manage and there aren't many medications that help very much, so you're into a kind of management problem. So talking to my body in the journal has been really helpful around what it needs and what it wants. I think I'm making quite a few strides. It's like self-hypnosis or any other self tools. It's one of a whole set of things that manages

things better.

Strategies

The previous strategies of Turning to Self, Covering Up, and Exploring Options for self-expression continue to be relevant for this stage and broaden in scope at this point. The focus here is Turning to Self in the journal and developing strategies within the parameters of journal writing that promote personal growth, self-understanding, and satisfaction. Although external influences can have some bearing on the individual's process of growth, the life of any person is ultimately an individual responsibility. Moustakas (1967) makes this assertion in the following comment.

> All that man can do is affect the environment in which potentialities can be fulfilled. Materials and resources can be provided which may enrich experience, but in real growth the individual alone determines his direction and his reality. Tenderness, care, personal warmth, confirmation, all affect the development of the individual and the enhancement of self. (p. 137)

Shifting Time

Shifting Time becomes an important aspect of the journal writer's efforts toward attaining the desired goals. Shifting Time refers to the movement, transfer, or change of time as it relates to past, present, or future. Progoff (1975) refers to the moving back and forth in time and into potentials as "stretching time like a rubber band that is being pulled at each end" (p. 141).

Shifting Time is used in this stage to explore ideas and options that may not have been explored earlier. For example, the use of journal writing can enable the individual to unearth the details of specific situations of the past. Returning to the past serves a number of purposes for the journal writer. First of all, it enables the writer to review certain details and to be reminded of positive circumstances. It can also provide a means to re-examine the past with greater thoroughness. Progoff (1975) notes the importance of memory, the memory of a crossroad in our life experience when we took one path and left the other. He adds that one of the goals of timestretching is to open out past experiences so that the latent possibilities contained in them can be exposed. The facilitative nature of Shifting Time is evident in the following comment:

> To place ourselves there so that we can feel it again, even in a sensory way, tends to facilitate the movement of memories. It becomes easier for us then to reexperience the events that occurred in that earlier time and to recognize the intersections and alternate possibilities that were present but hidden in the midst of the pressures of our life. (Progoff, 1975, 144)

Each participant spoke about the use of Shifting Time and the importance of contending with past, present or future concerns. While this strategy was applied in different ways, it was a common one for all. Several informants expressed their need to deal with unfinished business and to say good-bye to a relationship that had

terminated. Tobin (1971) defines the notion of unfinished business as "the inhibition of an emotion that was experienced at one or more times during the relationship" (p. 150). Shifting Time from the present to the past permits unexpressed and difficult emotions to be dealt with in the individual's own way and own time. This allows the individual to move beyond the position of being stuck, or hanging on as expressed in the following comment:

> I've also used it (journal) to explore unfinished business for me, like to write someone a letter to get my feelings out more clearly, to try and let go of something that I've wanted to move beyond in my life.

One woman described the benefits derived from shifting her focus of attention to the past in the following comment:

> It has allowed me to finish some relationships that are unfinished in my life so- a person I dated many years ago, just never said good-bye to and worked in the journal for quite some time and, actually ended up contacting the person, writing a letter and feeling quite finished with it and closed. That was a sort of thing that haunted me.

Returning to past issues in this way diminishes the need to cover up and mask the emotions that were once unresolved. A sense of resolution and relief are attained, thus affirming the individual's sense of accomplishment.

Shifting Time also involves moving ahead in time, from one's present to the future. It can be expressed in terms of fantasy, hopes, fears, or dreams. The individual is able to paint a picture of what is desired or undesired. Exploring hopes or fears of the future becomes a way of

problem-solving and goal setting. Anticipated issues or aspirations can be addressed. One informant who had experienced the termination of several difficult relationships and encountered isolation in the company of her married friends spoke of the importance of articulating her hopes in the journal. By Shifting Time to the future, she was able to reassure herself that her desires were realistic and attainable.

> What I would want to find in a man...I would hope that I would find somebody that has similar interests and ideas, someone who would be happy and want to treat me nicely and share in things and have the same kind of basic family ideas.

Shifting time has the effect of transporting the individual to the past, present, or future. Issues of the past may be resolved. Parts of the self that were set aside may be reclaimed. Possibilities for the future can be activated. As Progoff (1975) comments:

> It expands the range of possibilities available to our life. By stretching our contact with the past and future in a fluid and symbolic way, it draws us into an intensive experience of the unity of the Now moment in which all of our life history, what is past and what is still to come, has its immediate focus. (p. 152)

Creative Self-Expression

> One of them (creatures), as I was dialoguing with her, became very clearly this image- of this creature with wet, damp hair, kind of walking out through a bunch of flames. And she was sweaty and sort of sinewey. I realized that this anxiety was this tortured creature but I also realized that she was relatively attractive to me. She was certainly thinner than me and looked like she was physically more active than I. So the dialogue I had at that time was, "You have some strengths, you have some beauty. You have some things to teach me". So as I begin to talk to her and see her

> strengths, her weaknesses don't grab me from behind. It probably doesn't make much cognitive sense but it's an incredibly powerful tool to get me more centered, more aware of myself, and having everything synchronized. When I was six, I gave up my imaginary friends and here I am now developing new imaginary friends.

Creative expression is a means of dealing with one's environment and oneself that frees the imagination and allows the individual to experience alternative ways of exploring choices and possibilities. Creative expression may serve the purpose of expressing and/or correcting an unsatisfying reality. Creativity may be a channel for articulating painful experiences that one is not prepared to face and confront directly. It can also be a way of expressing one's joy, happiness, and sense of wellbeing.

This strategy provides a protective shield as well as a mechanism for releasing emotions. One individual who was recently divorced and involved in a new relationship explained how she portrayed herself as a little dog in a short story as a way to articulate some of the anxiety and fear she was experiencing at the time.

> The end result is that he is interested in a sexual relationship. Well, I'm not ready for this. So when I write in my journal, I sort of find it hard to find the words to say how I feel about this man. But in my journal, I could do it through an animal, like I could do it through a pet. And I have this owner that owned me. He had put me in a cage and I was to stay in this house. Well, I guess somehow it was like I had gotten out of the house...Not only did I have to stay in the house, but he put me in this little cage. And one day he came home to find me outside of the cage...I was still in the house but he was really mad at me. So now I'm back in this cage. He's got it all locked up. The next time that I get out of this cage, I'm gone. Like

> I run for it and leave and I'm on this long journey. It takes a long time and I'm worn out. I'm struggling and I'm hiding. It's not safe to be out in the open. It's like I'm the reader of this story...Like I get to see what I think or what I feel or what's happening to me. So, then it's like an understanding. Then I can see what was wrong, what I was doing and say, "Hey, it was ok for me to feel like that."

Creative self-expression provides an avenue for the expression of pain, fear, or vulnerability. The use of personification, imaginary characters, or inanimate objects helps to distance the individual from difficult or painful emotions. Creative self-expression through storying, is a private journey for recreating the situation as well as the solutions. Only the writer is aware of the meaning and impact of the story. The use of this strategy in the journal also has the benefit of enabling the individual to return to the issue at a later point with a new sense of readiness and awareness that may not have been present at the time the issue was occurring.

The informants noted their use of creative expression in the journal. Examples included the use of colors to represent emotions, poetry, short stories, quotations from readings, dialogues with imaginary or real characters, and drawings. These forms of creativity enabled the individuals to transcend time and space through the imagination. This was facilitated by the strategies of Shifting Time and Opening Self.

Reviewing Journal

You can also set yourself some goals and write them in

> your journal and then you've got a record of them because you decided you wanted to make these goals. And then you come back and say, I made these goals or how did I make out? Did I really do things to help me get those goals? Where did I go wrong that I didn't attain that goal?

To review something is to go over, or examine again, or to reflect upon in memory. The journal, in this light, serves several purposes. First, the journal provides a source of self-evaluation. The writer can chart areas of change and growth.

> As the years went on, I could go back and look at my journal. It was something that really gave me a sense of the changes that I'd been through. And even when I go back now, I look at it and I'm still dealing with the same issues but at a far different kind of level, I suppose of definite awareness. But, it was kind of inspirational in that sense, in later years as I went back and looked at it because I see this is where I've come from and I suppose I learned to trust my process through that because I knew that through the darker times, I could work it out and reach some sort of resolution.

Reviewing the journal enables the writer to monitor issues, concerns or transitions that are being dealt with and changes needed in order to accomplish a certain end. The goals can be specific, such as deciding to see a counsellor or taking the initiative to resolve a conflict. The goals may be general, such as being more friendly and sociable. Reviewing the journal may also trigger memories of events and reactions that were involved. It provides a means of reliving an experience in which the details are less clear. The journal captures changes in the individual's life that were positive and favourable. In

this way, it is an encouraging reminder of what is possible and attainable. It also holds events that are described as painful, difficult, and negative. Reviewing the journal can provide markers of how growth and change have taken place and where change may still be necessary or desired.

The informants spoke about the journal as a book of memories that documented important changes such as falling in love, falling out of love, losing a parent, becoming a parent, or making shifts in attitudes/behaviors. As one informant stated:

> It's kind of like a flashback. One reason why I like to read through my journal after I've written through it is- a lot of times after you've had a bad day, something has got you down, you can read about something you did in the past that was a special time, a happy time or whatever. You can read about it. It's like a flashback. You can remember it, relive it. You're lifted up.

Reviewing the journal is a temporary return to experiences involving self and others. It can provide the assurance and comfort of memories and positive action. Yet, in a matter of pages, it can also bring back the reality of past pain, confusion, and struggle.

Consequences

The conditions of this stage combined with the contexts that exist and the strategies that are implemented, result in several consequences which lead the individual toward new understandings, behaviors, and attitudes. For all of the informants, the journal writing process facilitated

awareness and desire for growth although differences existed in terms of the nature and extent of the changes involved.

Movement from Stage III to Stage IV is evident in the consequences found in this stage. Just as well-made compost is deep brown in color, dry-crumbly, sweet-smelling, and pleasant to handle, those individuals who have encountered a resolution of certain issues experience a sense of relief and an interest in continuing to effect change. Individuals who require more time and space to work through the issues remain longer in this stage. Several individuals spoke of the loss of a significant relationship and not being "finished" with the issues involved. Others expressed a willingness to move on but needed to explore what channels existed to bring this about.

> ...an important relationship ended quite suddenly and I went through summer and fall feeling numb and immobilized. I spent much of my spare time alone, writing in the journal- ruminating, moping, reliving the pain, the dreams I had...One day the soothing part of being like this wore out suddenly as I experienced this immense boredom and repulsion for having wasted so much time on this man. I got this urgent desire to get out there and live again. The journal was something that took me back to the past...once I finished getting all that out, I felt a sense of life return.

The journal writing process can reflect the difficult task of waiting for change to take place. Several individuals spoke of writing less, or not at all, as the emotional pain and confusion seemed too great to bear at

that time. In some ways, an analogy can be drawn between important issues not attended to adequately and the gardener who becomes discouraged.

> Many gardeners, at one time or another, start to build a compost heap, but often become disgusted with the end product- a wet, smelly, unusable mess. If a compost heap is overly wet and soggy, and ill-supplied with oxygen, instead of decomposition, putrification occurs and wet, slimely, smelly stuff results. (Andrews, 1987, p. 97)

Other individuals wrote minimally, changed the focus of their writing or did not write at all in order to distance themselves from the situation or gain a different perspective. In terms of timing, each individual experienced this stage differently. The timing and regularity in examining issues varies for each individual, just as each plant flourishes best if attention is paid to its uniqueness in character and needs. The benefits of a well-decomposed and cultivated garden of experiences are improvements in the fertility and texture of the growth process.

Befriending Journal

> So the journal was a friend that I could tell things to and it was safe because you could tell the journal anything, basically and it wouldn't come back at you or say you were stupid. I have a suspicion that without the journal, I would have been impossibly lonesome. Since I did not make friends easily and when I did make friends, did not disclose myself to them. This became a friend, a buddy that I could talk to.

A friend is a person whom one knows well, shares with, and confides in. A friend can be a close acquaintance, a

person who is on the same side in a struggle, an ally. Befriending the journal bears some similarity to the process of building a friendship. The writer gets acquainted with one's self through the writing process. This involves taking a look inward to see the strengths and acknowledging the limitations. As one journal writer stated, "The journal is just me anyways".

In the journal the individual interacts and dialogues with self and others who may be real or imaginary characters. In the midst of pain, loneliness and defeat or joy, success and contentment, the companionship of the journal was present for the writers.

> The journal has been a part of my life history for over twenty years. It marks the different and significant changes that have come my way like my struggles with being a lonely teen, family problems...beginning to succeed..The journal has also been a part of my adult years although less so but it still captures important things that I've sorted out and some of the personal victories that I've experienced. So, in a way I've had a friendship with the journal, kind of like someone with a friend. Although it's not quite the same, there is this quiet kind of togetherness.

Just as a friend can provide honesty, support, critical feedback and new insights, the journal can be a source of self-feedback. In this way, the journal is a safe place to reflect, explore, and practice anticipated changes. Examples include: becoming more sociable, assertive, or composed in interpersonal relationships and expressing anger effectively.

Finding A Resort

> If I write in my journal, if I write down my anxieties and worries, the paper seems to capture them. They're out of me - captured and I can leave them behind me. I've said something about it. I'm freer, not so caught up in anything. It's very very releasing, calming.

To find a resort suggests that something is used as a refuge or recourse. The process of journal writing brings about a sense of refuge or recourse in a number of ways. There is a sense of safety, security, and privacy with respect to the issues and emotions expressed in the journal. Writing in the journal is a private activity and this permits the writer to "say it just like it is". The writer has a means of self-expression without scrutiny or judgment from others. The individual can evaluate personal circumstances in the confines of the journal before taking steps towards change. This privacy can instill a sense of relief and permission. It also enables the individual to trust and to get acquainted with emotions and behaviors and become less fearful of limitations and others' responses.

Finding a resort means experiencing relief and solace through the release of tension. One individual describes the journal as a source of solace through the following:

> It's almost like I needed the journal out there as a part of me all those years. It was all like I needed to hang on to myself for years and years because I was that unsure. So that was part of the security, like the journal made me real. It's a funny way to put it but it was a way of hanging on to myself.

The journal serves the purpose of providing an external

security. The individual becomes more acquainted with the inner self through writing.

By learning how to use the journal in ways that are personally beneficial, there is an internal consolidation of self that begins to occur. It is marked by a growing sense of awareness, self-acceptance, and an acknowledgment of limitations as well as assets. There is also recognition and relief, knowing that changes are possible.

Balancing

> My intentions are to be more whole. I have a real tendency in my life to be an intellectual. Like just to be a brain and the body flops along behind- not to take care of myself spiritually or physically or emotionally. And the Progoff method formalizes to me that balance. It makes me work in a balanced way. So, I can't just write out of the intellectual part of me. So that formalizes me being more holistic. For example, I choose to do an awful lot of talking to my own body. That formalizes me as a brain getting in touch with me as a body.

Balancing involves openness in the journal. It means letting go of the usual, unsatisfactory ways of dealing with issues or concerns. To balance something means to bring about a state of equilibrium. In terms of journal writing, balancing was experienced by the informants in a number of ways. There was a sense of balancing in terms of expressing positive and negative emotions, attending to different aspects of self such as the spiritual, social, physical or emotional, focusing on personal strengths as well as weaknesses, and extending oneself to others. For example, one individual perceived himself as judgmental and

critical of self and others. For him, balancing meant a growing acceptance of his weaknesses and a need to be more accepting of others. For another participant, balancing meant the new-found freedom for expressing sadness, anger, or frustration.

Among the informants, the nature and extent of balancing varied and reflected different changes. The means of acquiring a sense of balance varied as well. One individual, for example, refers to shifting time as the focus of balancing self.

> I think I'm starting to get in touch with the child part of me that I haven't worked on. That's sort of new. I think as a young child I had some difficulties that I haven't really looked at consciously. Having done some therapy through the years and that sort of thing, I still feel there's stuff to work on there. As I'm writing, I'm getting more in touch with my feelings as a young child. I have a lot of memories of childhood but they're not feeling memories. They are thought memories.

The effect of balancing is a sense of improvement and growing contentment. This balancing requires initiative and motivation to look inward- a process that can be confusing and frightening. Moustakas (1967) acknowledges these effects in the following comment:

> Self-inquiry is a painful process in which life is viewed with a new perception, a new awareness. What was accepted, as a matter of course, now comes into doubt...The old perceptions no long hold. Each detail is considered from the perspective of a new self searching for a new identity. (p. 121)

The personal benefits derived from becoming more balanced include interpersonal gains. Becoming more

balanced can create and enhance relationships which in turn reinforce the development and maintenance of those gains.

> Journalling has helped me to develop myself and to lessen my preoccupation with my fears and insecurities. It is still something that I have to work on but I am more conscious of strengthening my abilities and assets and being less dependent on external opinions on how I am as a person. I'm more at home with myself and with others now because I rely less on other's opinions and what I need to do for them.

Gaining Perspective

Gaining perspective means to arrive at a judgment of facts or circumstances with regard to their relative importance. As previously mentioned, the goals of journal writing included understanding and self-improvement. Gaining perspective, in light of these goals occurs in a number of areas and is expressed in several ways. The conditions and strategies of the Composting Stage contribute to the deepened understanding and discovery of self. Gaining perspective is a vital component for cultivating experience and caring for oneself. It results from making sense of the situations or issues. It may involve gaining a perspective on certain behaviors, reactions, attitudes, or experiences. A new understanding can be acquired as a result of reexamining issues. Gaining perspective also involves acquiring a greater sense of control as reflected in the following.

> As I learn to tame my anxiety and own it and personify it and talk with it, I begin to manage it so it doesn't sort of jump out and catch me unaware. I'm more aware of anxiety. It's becoming a part of me that I manage

> as opposed to an unknown. It's sort of like the difference between being in the jungle and having a lion jump on me when you're just out for a daily walk and being in a lion tamer's cage and having all the skills to train the lion. It's not that the lion goes away, but in a cage, you're a lot safer. The lion is there and you're prepared for it.

The informants used a variety of descriptions to refer to their gaining perspective. These include: "it's like an understanding"; "and then I realized", "the journal always catches me up when I begin to write in it", "I can catch new things", and "it finally dawned on me".

Accounting For Personal Changes

> I listen to myself better. I'm more tuned in to my own needs. I hear myself when I'm stuck, much better. It's a feedback loop for me as opposed to getting feedback from other people. It has increased the quality of some of my personal relationships and the people that I've very close to. I am more honest and clearer with them. And I think that some of those relationships are of higher quality...for whatever reason, I don't judge myself in the Progoff journal as I maybe did in that old diary.

The desire for self-understanding and change began in Stage One with the experience of important changes and the accompanying emotions. In Stage Three, the results of these attempts become identifiable. There is a recognition of the positive changes that are occurring. These gains are reflected in comments such as becoming "more gentle" with oneself and others, "being less critical and judgemental", "experiencing less of a need to be competent in everything", "becoming less of a pleaser", and "being more self-accepting". The changes are both personal and

interpersonal.

As the changes are recognized and acknowledged, the process of working through concerns brought about by life experiences is reinforced. The journal writing process is viewed as a tool for self-exploration and personal growth. Being able to read and re-read, and to visualize what has been written aid in providing several different ways for the individual to engage in the process of change. As one informant states:

> When I see the words on paper, it's very simple for me to sort out what's the wheat and what's the chaff... when something is playing in my head that's not easy to do. I think - well I have a million problems in my head. When I start writing..I see that there is one thing that's really bugging me and I think I'll work on that as opposed to trying to work on a few hundred. Sometimes I read my journal aloud for the same reason that hearing my voice read it, I can catch new things that are not in the words but are in the voice.

The cause of the changes are not always known, although all of the informants attest to the journal writing process as being a significant contributor to personal change. It is quite possible that writing facilitates a "learning that we know more than we know we know" when the "total self" is being expressed in a "non-planned" and "unstructured" way (Craig, 1983, p. 375).

It is also interesting to note that the changes that occur vary. What one individual regards as a significant change may, in another person's view, be just the beginning of change. While conscious goal setting in the journal may

be specified by the writer, there is an interplay of motivations and actions that occur at an implicit and subtle level. Several informants commented that initially, they did not go to the journal for clearcut purposes such as problem solving or reaching clarity on an issue, but at a later point, they realized that the journal did produce these benefits. The following statement points to the subtleties of growth:

> ...and we often find ourselves drawn into a progressive description and reconstruction of the events of our life. We are drawn into a substantial process of writing, but not because it is writing. Eventually we will find that what we have written is valuable to us in that it has led us on a largely unconscious level to a fuller understanding and perspective of the contents of our life. And it is helpful at a practical level in leading us to make decisions...(Progoff, 1988, p. 4).

This realization sets in motion the choice to continue working along with the process of discovery and recreating self. Wheelis (1973) states:

> The more cogently we prove ourselves to have been shaped by causes, the more opportunities we create for changing. The more we change, the more possible it becomes to see how we determined we were in that which we have just ceased to be. (p. 87)

STAGE FOUR: MAINTAINING SELF

The theoretical codes developed for Stage Four can be viewed as characteristics of the major category. This stage reflects the last stage of the theoretical framework of the journal writing process. It depicts the developmental progression from the previous stage. A more detailed outline of this stage is presented next.

> I suppose it's like a couple who fell in love. They've been living together for quite some time and they're settled in. It feels very stable to me. It feels very useful. I maybe take it for granted. I don't rave about it as much as I used to. It's definitely the most powerful tool for self-awareness that I've found in the last two or three years.

Stage Four is the stage of Maintaining Self. As described, Stage Three involved the composting and cultivation of experiences. The conditions, strategies, contexts, and consequences of Stage Three enabled the individual not only to release tension and find expression through the journal but also to take steps to contend with personal and interpersonal issues. In so doing, a commitment to self-development and change is secured. Accompanying this achievement is the acknowledgment of the stability and sustenance that are found in composting and making sense of life experiences through journal writing. Attempts to contend with dissatisfaction and discover some kind of resolution are also realized in some areas, namely, improving relationships with significant others, leaving an unhappy relationship, and becoming socially involved.

In Stage Four, the journal writing process itself begins to change in several ways. First of all, there is a movement from the stage of Composting to that of Maintaining Self in that efforts are made to continue personal growth and self-improvement. However, the context is one which embraces the interpersonal realm as opposed to only the intrapersonal and personal realms as seen in the

previous stages. In this stage, the individual perceives personal gains that have been made. There is an awareness of wanting and needing to continue in this direction of personal growth.

In this stage, Maintaining Self includes the individual's attempts to secure changes that have been made. This may involve altering relationships with others and cultivating new ones that affirm the positive changes. For example, in making personal changes, there can be the inevitable reaction of others that needs to be considered. Several informants who began to express their relational problems in the journal experienced further distancing and conflict with their partners when they were "discovered", either by their partner reading their journal or through the partner's noticing the changes in behavior or language. One individual who began to be less passive and compliant with family members encountered a period of emotional flux as she was met with their disapproval and disappointment.

> I had been all too aware of the need to get out of my rut, that is- to let go of the powerful ways in which others ran my life...So by the time I began to take action and control my own life after so many years, I, being the kind of person that I am, had counted some of the costs that would be involved-not all but enough to anticipate some flak. There have been more tensions and conflicts about me deciding what I want to do and it's been tiring to deal with others' negative reactions. The bottom line is though, the change is healthy and there are people close to me who are cheering me on. There's no turning back even though I've had periods that come and go- of sadness and feeling very distant from those who don't accept me as

I am now.

Needless to say, the changes made are not consistently initiated and sustained without difficulty, pain, and anxiety. There may also be the accompanying experiences of isolation and loneliness as reflected in Moustakas' (1967) comment:

> Every person wants to move forward, wants to have new experience, wants to grow. No relationship can remain secure without becoming stagnant and static. Man strives for new directions and new awakenings, and as he does, old patterns and bonds are broken, creating a vivid sense of self- sometimes a feeling of victory, sometimes a feeling of defeat and despair. (p. 107)

In previous stages, the journal writer was the object and receiver of changes and transitions. That is, changes and difficulties happened to the individual. At this point, the context of living becomes one in which the author and subject of change is the individual. The journal writer becomes the initiator of the changes towards personal growth. Changes are viewed as opportunities to learn from and respond to in healthy ways as opposed to being powerless and controlled by others or by circumstances. This new perspective allows the journal writer to continue to be the initiator and sustainer of the desired experiences. The sense of self becomes more secure and this in turn reinforces confidence.

The concern and emphasis of Stage Four revolves around maintaining the recreated parts of self. The recreated self is characterized by fluidity and flux. Growth

continues to take place. Re-creating is an ongoing, non-linear process. One cannot attain a fully recreated self as changes continue to occur. It becomes important then to examine what factors preserve the integrity of the process of re-creating self and how this self is sustained. A summary of Stage Four is provided below.

Table 5
Overview of Stage Four: Maintaining Self

Condition	Contexts	Strategies	Consequences
expanding self		creative self-expression	consolidating sense of self
	interpersonal	accommodating other options	outgrowing the need
	continuity		being an exemplar

Condition

In this stage there is a broadening of the conditions under which journal writing is maintained, as well as an extension of the strategies involved in Maintaining Self. The consequences of the previous stage (e.g. accounting for personal change, gaining a perspective, and finding a resort) are carried over as conditions in Stage Four. These have been described in Stage Three and will not be reiterated in this chapter. The characteristics of this stage stem in part from the reasons that now motivate the journal writer. The motivation to journal changes. So, the

reasons why an individual continues to engage in some form of behavior (journal writing) in the present are not the same reasons that originally lead to the behavior. Specific to the journal writing process, the reasons for originally engaging in writing pertained to the desire to make sense of and contend with change/transitions in life that were perceived as negative. It was also propelled by the subsequent need to express and explore alternatives or options in terms of dealing with the situation at hand.

In this stage, it becomes clear that the desire to maintain and continue self-improvement, rather than to simply express loneliness or fears, becomes an important incentive for continuing with journal writing activity.

Expanding Self

> It (journal writing) was searching and a lot of anguish, a lot of angry feelings, a lot of sadness. More and more that's changed. Like if I write now, I'm as likely to write about really positive things as I am about more difficult things..The stories I've been writing about when I go back to the beginning...of breaking out of innocence and naivete, the story of rediscovering, rebuilding myself, the story of grief and loss. And now I can see that I could start to write a story as I would like to build my life or as I am building my life much more along the line of standing up for myself, taking charge of my life more. I suppose I've moved from writing to just really more troubled, concrete kinds of things to being able to play more and imagine more in my journal.

The journal writer continues in the effort to maintain the gains that have been initiated on personal and interpersonal levels. In essence, there is a discovery of the positive, acceptable and potential aspects of self,

hence there is more acceptance and contentment.

While the journal writer was becoming more committed to the journal writing process in the previous stage, in this stage, the commitment changes qualitatively. First of all, there is a broadening of this commitment which involves a more varied and different use of the journal. The expanding of self is reflected in the commitment to continued understanding and personal growth in general. As the individual adopts new ways of looking inward and new ways of relating, there is a growing absence of the one-sided expression of negative experiences and emotions. This results in a heightened sense of wholeness and completeness, the joining together of the different aspects of self. It is a manifestation of the responsibility taken by the individual. There is an expansion of self as journal writing is borne out of desire rather than out of need.

The second aspect is the consolidating of the desire for self-improvement and personal growth. Journal writing as an activity is transcended. This means that the individual experiences a diminishing need to use the journal exclusively. The condition of expanding self also reflects the individual's awareness of how and when journal writing is most useful. Relationships and interpersonal contacts have been cultivated and these fulfill some of the needs, particularly if there is a willingness to risk. The

journal is used in a more selective way. For some participants, it means writing when "it gets really bad", for others, it means drawing the positive and negative together in the journal. As stated by one informant:

> Journal writing is for the real hurting times; if it's not really major, then I probably don't do a very good job of it. So all the spaces are actually all right times.

Strategies

Creative Self-Expression

As interest in expressing the internal life broadens, so also do the channels of self-expression. Whereas poetry, short stories, drama, drawings, and colors in the previous stages often reflected the pain, frustration, and loneliness of changes, this stage is marked by the use of similar mediums to express the joy, excitement, and contentment that are found in living. By this stage, the individual has experienced the satisfaction of what Maslow (1968) considers as belongingness and love needs which are characterized by an unsatisfied hunger for contact, for intimacy, for belongingness and by the need to overcome the pervasive experiences of aloneness, strangeness, loneliness, and alienation. The more basic needs have been satisfied, thus opening the way for the individual to move towards self-actualization. One woman, for example, articulates her need to express her creative self.

> I think I'm a journal writer because there is a creative part of me that is stifled. A good part of my life has been spent pretending I'm a good

> administrator, a linear, sequential mathematical kind of person. There's just a creative creature in me screaming to get it. That isn't very easily expressed anymore. I used to act and I don't do that anymore. That's partly my disability but partly just my life and what I decide to do in my spare time. I don't know if I'd be a journal writer if I really had an artistic way of expressing myself, whether I'd still do it or whether the artistic expression would take away the need...It's just a process, like a creative way of working on me. It's sort of like sculpting yourself.

The efforts made to broaden channels of creative self-expression are a reflection of the movement toward self-actualization which Maslow (1968) describes as the "ongoing actualization of potentials, capacities and talents, as fulfillment of mission (or call, fate or vocation), as a fuller knowledge of, acceptance of the person's own intrinsic nature, as an unceasing trend toward unity, integration or synergy within the person" (p. 25).

Accommodating Other Options

Accommodating Other Options becomes an important strategy in this stage. It refers to the resources external to the journal writer that are considered as means of understanding and expression. These options include: seeing a counsellor, sharing interpersonally or joining group therapy. Accommodating Other Options is aimed at maintaining improvements, receiving feedback on other areas that are in need of change, and satisfying the need for relationship and intimacy. The use of the journal will then depend on the availability and adequacy of the options as well as the extent to which the goals for keeping it are

modified. The more adequate the options are experienced to be, the more likely that the journal will become one of several means of expression.

Several informants attested to using the journal less frequently when they were experiencing contentment and as problematic concerns were resolved. Others continued to use the journal to express their positive emotions and experiences. As one individual commented:

> I don't write in my journal that much anymore. But I do write a lot of notes to myself...It's interesting how it's (journal) a friend that I've sort of grown away from because I've gotten to be more articulate in talking with people and in kind of being with other friends, I think, and being much more active.

As the individual becomes more self-accepting, there is less fearfulness about reaching out to connect with others. There is a diminishing need to use the strategy of Covering Up or Reserving. There is also less need to focus inward on problematic areas of life and a growing emphasis on the strategy of Opening Self to others. At this stage, creative expression captures who and what the individual is becoming. The informants spoke about their desire to engage in outward creative expressions of themselves. Examples given included, initiatives to engage in drama, teaching others about journal writing, writing/publishing short stories, professional articles, and poetry, and sharing the journals with others. Being involved with external resources such as those listed above encouraged

the individuals to be more balanced. This stage reflects Horney's (1945) notion that the individual is better able to utilize moving toward, against, or away from people depending on which is appropriate at the time.

Accommodating Other Options refers also to utilizing personal/internal resources more effectively and depending less on the opinions of others. There is a heightened awareness of the different ways of relating. The informants spoke of "feeling connected with others", "becoming less of an introvert", "not having to hang on to myself", "being more sociable", "being more willing to risk in relationships", and "being less judgmental of self". One woman captured how she had become more content with her changes:

> I think I'm more motivated now than I used to be. I'm a pleasing kind of personality. I think I am less focused on making other people happy these days. I can still feel that pleaser in me. But somehow, I'm a strong, more centered person.

In Horney's (1950) terms, this strategy involves the gaining of the feeling of being "an active determining force" in one's own life (p. 157).

Context

Interpersonal

The interpersonal context enables the journal writer to move beyond introspectiveness. This shift to the interpersonal allows for connection with others in individual or group settings. This, in turn broadens the

opportunities for continued growth. This context is borne out of the strategies and consequences of the previous stage, and is reinforced by the strategies of this stage.

Continuity

> It goes back to having that perspective of what is my process. So, if I'm entering a new situation and I'm feeling tight and frightened, now I know I don't have to wait two days to figure out what that is all about. I know I can sit down and I could write about it or I can just think it through. I'm just more articulate that way. So, to use it more consciously...I know that if I'm stuck on something, then I can use it as a tool to explore and get through whatever it is that I'm stuck with. And I know that that works. It's one of many ways of doing it but it does work for me.

In this stage, continuity becomes the context adopted by the individual to maintain the identity and sense of self that has been attained thus far. Continuity, in terms of a context refers to the quality of being connected in space, time, or development. This context of continuity for the journal writer may be summarized as follows:

(a) the continued efforts put forth to bring about changes that are directed toward self-improvement and personal growth;

(b) the ongoing maintenance of gains made such as self-identity, self-assuredness, and being in control of one's life;

(c) the connectedness between one's past, present, and future. This fluidity in time enables the individual to choose whatever time shifts seen as desirable or necessary to re-enter in the change

process;

(d) More basically, the context of continuity means that the process of journal writing and the use of other options for problem-solving, understanding and growth are now familiar to the individual. As a result, there is less fear of the unknown in terms of what may be found within or outside of self;

(e) there is also continuity between the personal self and the interpersonal self. The complementarity that exists means that either can enhance the other.

The context of continuity is a broadening of the avenues that provide the foundation for the individual to recreate and to continue to build an acceptable sense of self. One can conceivably undergo setbacks or crises and the concomitant conditions of Stage One. The context of continuity implies that what is experienced and learned in the previous stages, in turn, can be applied to new experiences. It is not possible to come through transitions and change the same person as before the change occurred. Essentially, there is an extra increment of meaning and experience added to the individual's awareness. There is a spiralling, cumulative effect.

Consequences

Consolidating A Sense of Self

> Over the years, I have grown gradually and somewhat painfully from being this awkward and indecisive, lost soul to being able to put my shortcomings in perspective and also to affirm my own strengths rather than to have to prove myself to everyone out there..But I've grown from the early days of journal writing. I don't need someone else to protect me because I can stand strongly on my own. Yes- I've occasionally dabbled with counselling, read self-help books or share with a close friend but now it's like these things are a refreshing drink rather than me thirsting and yearning for a well to find eternal solace in.

The consequences of the four stages of journal writing are two-fold. First, there is a Consolidating of Self. Secondly, there is Outgrowing the Need to write in a journal. Rather than writing out of urgency or desperation, the individual writes out of desire. These consequences mark the process of self that is acquired at Stage IV. The context is no longer one of unsettling flux and tension. Instead, it is a context in which the individual experiences the continuity that life is a part of personal growth and change.

The effect of the individual's consolidating of self is self-pacing. This means that the individual assumes control in choosing when, how, or what to write in the journal. There is evidence of the ability to act independently of external pressures or expectations from others. Initiative is taken to appraise and re-evaluate the journal use as well as life events. Several informants

made references to renegotiating their commitment to journal writing once they reached some resolution, desire or clarity in their lives. This is expressed in terms of "not having to write regularly" or when one does write, there is less focusing on the negative circumstances, and being less obliged to write as taught or advised by courses, counsellors or workshops.

Another aspect of Consolidating a Sense of Self is the consolidation of previous consequences such as Gaining Perspective, Finding a Resort, Balancing, and Accounting for Change. At this point, not only is the individual able to experience this consolidation in terms of journal writing and being in solitude but also through being in contact and in relationship with others. Unlike the initial stages that were marked by the individual's uncertainty, loneliness, and lack of direction, this stage points to the ascent on the spiral of continued growth. Whether alone or in communion with others, the link between the contexts of the personal and interpersonal are secured.

Outgrowing the Need

> I spend less time ruminating and less time meditating, sort of than I used to because I think my needs have changed that way..I probably express myself much more openly now and directly with just the way I live with people so I don't have the same need at all...I feel adequately connected with people around me. I'm just living my life.

As the individual comes to terms with and makes sense of important issues, the need to write in a journal

diminishes. The informants described their outgrowing of the journal as "keeping a diary" in which important dates and events were recorded or mementos were slotted in as a calendar of happenings. Several individuals spoke about writing more sporadically simply to capture and preserve memories of experiences or writing about their issues/problems but with less reliance on the journal as they had learned to relate more openly in significant relationships. In acknowledging the transition from journal writing to relating with others Nin (1975) states:

> Because the diary was, as a Russian poet said, in some ways a solitary chant, but nevertheless a chant intended to be shared with others (p. 247).

Essentially, the journal became one of several options which they could choose from to deal with the issue or concern at hand. By Focusing on Self, Composting, and Maintaining Self, a re-created view of journal writing is ushered in.

Being an Exemplar

> I've considered training as a leader of the Progoff workshops. I'm really committed to the process. Having found them so exciting for me, I'm using more self-reflective activities for the people in the groups I work with...I've become much more aware of how to use more introverted techniques I call them...I can really see benefits in my work especially for people from special populations, families with special needs children.

On a personal and professional level, there is a strong interest in enabling others to learn of the benefits of the

journal writing process. From a personal level, individuals spoke of their effort and interest in promoting journal writing among their friends and with groups or organizations they were involved with. Furthermore, there was a sense of ease and openness about "telling their story" of growing through major life events/changes and how the journal was used. One woman who experienced a difficult relationship with her partner and who later was divorced had this to say about sharing her writing of personal experiences with a class of women:

> Astrologically, because I'm a Gemini, I'm a communicator and a storyteller. I think that what I've learned, I'm willing to share. I'm not the type of person that whatever has happened in their life, good or bad, they keep the secrets and they don't share. Like I'm willing to share my story, and if nothing else, maybe by example, they can see.

Being An Exemplar also has importance for the individual in terms of generations to come, or in terms of issues that may become more relevant in the future. This consequence bears the notion of immortalizing self, as living on is an effect of Being an Exemplar. Several individuals mentioned the importance of enabling future generations to learn from their journal writings about the issues/struggles that they encountered, and the manner in which these were dealt with. For others, the journal was a container of "truths" and important memories that may become important in the future. One woman described how her journal captured details of how her relationship with

her husband deteriorated. She thought that her children were too young at the time to fully comprehend the situation. In her view, the journal may be a helpful source of information in the future for her children to understand her perspective.

Being an Exemplar is also relevant from a professional dimension. Several individuals expressed interest in teaching others how to use journal writing for self-exploration and growth. Teaching workshops, sharing experientially with others about their own journalling, allowing others to read their journals, and publishing the creative expressions of their personal struggles and resolutions were some of the examples given.

The effect of Being an Exemplar is that the steps taken in the journey of personal growth and development are communicated to others. There is a reaffirmation of the individual's ability to face challenges and to re-create possibilities for living.

"To create and in creating to be created." Lequier, a French philosopher, authored this phrase which affirms the individual's ability to reassemble and shape existence, to confer meaning on life in the process of seeking it, and to create patterns of significance by pursuing them (cited in Scholar, 1984, p. 15).

SUMMARY OF THEORY

Basic Psychosocial Process: Recreating Self

The purpose of this study was to generate a substantive theory about the processes which account for the experiences of six women and men engaged in journal writing. The basic psychosocial process which emerged from this analysis was "Recreating Self". In an attempt to enhance one's understanding of the self as a psychological construct, Epstein (1973) notes that the self-concept is a self-theory that plays an explanatory role. This is reflected in the following comment:

> It is a theory that the individual has unwittingly constructed about himself as an experiencing, functioning individual, and it is part of a broader theory which he holds with respect to his entire range of significant experience. (p. 407)

There are three functions served by a self-theory according to Epstein (1973): "to optimize the pleasure/pain balance of the individual over the course of a lifetime; to facilitate the maintenance of self-esteem, and to organize the data of experience in a matter that can be coped with effectively" (p. 407).

The journal writing process involves a set of behaviors that develops over time and stems from the attempt to solve a basic problem, contending with self-dissatisfaction. Recreating Self is a psychological process as it focuses on change over time. The self is a changing self; it is a self that is affected by positive and negative

circumstances. Furthermore, it is the self by which change is effected. In order to resolve the problem of self-dissatisfaction, the journal writer engages in a series of behaviors that revolve around Recreating Self. A parallel can be drawn between the individual's efforts to solve the problems of daily living and that of a scientist as reflected in the following comment:

> both continuously make and test hypotheses and revise their observations into schemata which then are organized into a network of broader schemata called theories. If experience were not so arranged, it would be impossible to behave effectively in a complex world with innumerable conflicting demands (Epstein, 1973, p. 408).

The basic psychosocial process (BPP) of the phenomenon of journal writing has been identified is "Recreating Self". This is the most central, or core category which links together the other categories and their properties. Some of the questions that helped to identify the core category were:

What seems to be the main theme, pattern or story line happening over and over again in these interviews?

Is there a theme that seems consistent with and best explains what is happening in all the cases under study?

What category do all the other categories seem to be leading up to or pointing to?

As Glaser notes, "the goal of grounded theory is to generate a theory that accounts for a pattern of behavior which is relevant and problematic for those involved"

(1978, p. 93).

In this study, the problematic behavior is how individuals contend with self-dissatisfaction through journal writing. The theory is explained by a core category, one which processes or solves the problem addressed and explains as much variation in behavior as possible. The core category which explains how individuals deal with dissatisfaction in their lives, is "recreating self." This activity occurs over the course of four stages. It begins when significant life changes or transitions occur, leading the individual to eventually seek out journal writing as a means of making sense of the experience. Eventually, there is a decision to maintain and continue the process of self-development. The four stages are:

1. Stage One: Focusing on Self
2. Stage Two: Exploring Options
3. Stage Three: Composting
4, Stage Four: Maintaining Self

The process of Recreating Self is shown in Figure 1. The stage theory is conceptualized as non-lineal, recursive, and cumulative. The theory reflects the processes involved in journal writing and highlights the conditions, contexts, strategies, and consequences involved in the individual's endeavours to recreate self "from the ground up".

THE STAGES OF JOURNAL WRITING

I. Focusing On Self

The experiences of change and transition result in emotional responses of confusion, uncertainty, frustration, loneliness, and the perceived need to begin Focusing on Self (Stage One). The strategy of Turning to Self stems from not having or wanting the social-emotional resources of close friends or significant others. This strategy may also result from experiencing fear of rejection or criticism of any self-disclosure.

II. Exploring Options

These circumstances set the stage for Exploring Options (Stage II). As the individual focuses inward, options for self-expression and appraising the situation are explored. There is an exploration of how the journal may be of help in sorting out the issues and/or concerns. The strategy of Covering Up provides distance, time, and protection for the issue to be explored in privacy.

III. Composting

The movement from stage to stage is contingent upon a sense of relief and satisfaction that is acquired. It is also contingent upon the individual's motivation to continue to make sense, gain perspective, and clarify the issues at hand, and to in turn, find meaning, consolation and confidence about certain choices. The strategies that are utilized for these purposes are shifting time,

objectifying, reviewing the journal, and comparing self over time. The use of creative expression enables the individual to deal with personal and interpersonal matters through such means as short stories or dialogues with another person.

IV. Maintaining Self

Having experienced some relief and resolution of the concerns, the individual may or may not continue with journal writing. At this point, the individual is better able to discern how the journal may be of benefit. This is reflected in the use of certain strategies such as: modifying the use of the journal, appraising the journal's use, or balancing emotions in the journal. The journal writer is also able to accommodate other options for expression and development.

The Cultivation of Experience

The journal writer is a person who cultivates experience. The cultivation of experience, like the cultivation of the soil by the gardener, requires proper attention and management. As an important part of the plant's environment, the soil provides an anchor for plants and a resevoir of moisture and nutrients (Everett, 1966). In like manner, the "soil" or experiences require tilling, preparation and tending in order to enhance growth. The journal writing process reflects the attempt to engage in learning how best to cultivate experiences.

IV. MAINTAINING SELF

*BECOMING COMMITTED

*CONTEXT OF CONTINUITY

*ACCOMMODATING OTHER OPTIONS

*OUTGROWING THE NEED

III. COMPOSTING

*AUTONOMY OF SELF-EXPRESSION

*MAKING SENSE

*FINDING A RESORT

*INCORPORATING INTERPERSONAL SELF IN CONTEXT OF PERSONAL AND INTRAPERSONAL SELF

II. EXPLORING OPTIONS

*EXPERIENCING DISSATISFACTION WITH SELF

*EXPLORING OPTIONS FOR SELF-EXPRESSION

*WANTING SELF-IMPROVEMENT

I. FOCUSING ON SELF

*CONTEXT OF CHANGE AND TRANSITION

*TURNING TO SELF

Figure 1. Recreating Self Through Journal Writing

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction:

This study was conducted to discover and elucidate behaviors and patterns of behaviors in the journal writing process. The findings reflect the "going forward or progression" that the Latin derivative "processus" implies (Reber, 1985, p. 577). The need for discovery-oriented research is clear. Levi (1985) recommended that future research take into consideration how writing achieves its therapeutic goals as a self-help technique, what components of the process are required to produce change, and the meaning of the journal for the journal keeper. This study focused upon process and maximum variation rather than minimum variation among the journal writers.

The Research Question

The original question of interest was identified as: what are the psychological processes involved in the experience of journal writing? The question was expressed in a broad way to enable depth, background, and context to be addressed. The central research question was rewritten to establish the purpose of the study. The purpose was to identify, describe, and provide a theoretical analysis of the psychological processes involved in the experience of journal writing.

During the beginning stages of the interviewing

process this question was addressed by asking each participant the following: tell me about your experiences in journal writing. How did you begin? What has journal writing been like for you? The generality of the questions enabled each individual to discuss what was relevant to their experience of journal writing and to allow a focus to develop as data were collected and analyzed. By keeping the initial focus general, the potential for research bias was kept to a minimum.

The Evolving Research Question

In grounded theory research, it is common for the research question to change during data collection and analysis as the focus of the research becomes clearer (May, 1986). In this study, as the researcher continued interviewing, transcribing, and analyzing the data, the central research question became increasingly clear. One of the most predominant concerns of the participants was the need to contend with dissatisfaction and the desire for self-improvement. The participants commented on how they began their journal writing. Typically, a transition or major change was occurring or had occurred. Concommitant with the transition were emotions that drew the individual to look inward as a means of dealing with the situation, understanding it, and, eventually, taking steps toward change.

The research question changed as a function of the

research process in general and the emerging theory based on the analysis of the content provided by the participants. In terms of content, the participants spoke about their experiences of change/transition in the language of "making sense" of what had happened, "sorting it out", "getting things in perspective", "finding ways to handle the situation" and "making improvements" in their lives.

The Participants' Part

The participants described the many advantages of journal writing. They spoke of how writing had played a significant part in changing some aspect of their lives. Examples of the themes of change included: adjusting to separation, divorce or death of a significant other; coping with the terminal illness of a parent; experiencing conflict/crises in a relationship; and venturing out to experiment with new ideas on improving their lives (e.g. entering therapy, expressing anger, or asserting themselves).

The participants held varying views and experiences with respect to the use of journal writing. Although the informants undertook different actions/responses to their situations, the research process revealed that broadly related processes and patterned regularities were common among them. The research question was also shaped by the explanation of the psychological processes experienced by

the participants as a group. While they held differing views and experiences with respect to the use of journal writing, there were commonly shared behavioral patterns. The participants addressed the steps they wanted to take with reference to the more specific concern of self-improvement. They addressed the content as identified issues, and with regard to their development over time. In this sense, the research process was influenced by both the content and the process experienced by the journal writers. The research questions became more oriented to how the individuals experienced personal development; what initiatives were taken by them; and how self-development was manifested in their lives. Stated in the form of questions, these research concerns were as follows:

1. How do the adults in the research view the use of journal writing with regard to their experience of significant change/transition in their life?
2. What actions do the adults engage in given the sense of self-dissatisfaction and the desire for personal growth and improvement?
3. How are these thoughts and actions integrated into a process by which adults manifest self-development with respect to journal writing?
4. How do these individuals acquire a sense of self-improvement through the use of journal writing?

The Findings

The results of this study are examined in relation to the extant literature. As the literature on journal writing does not address the process or the developmental nature of this activity, other models that have features of developmental patterning are discussed in terms of their relevance to the journal writing model. By having other data sources support the current findings, the validity of the model is enhanced. Mitchell (1986) refers to this as methodological triangulation.

Experiential Learning: The Role of Change, Transitions, and Triggers

The findings of this study indicated that changes, transitions, and crises prompted the individual to contend with dissatisfaction. Attempts were made to make sense of the events and search for resolutions. These triggers were particularly common in the beginning stages of the writing process. The situations were, at times, anticipated (e.g. moving away from home) or unforeseen (e.g. sudden death of significant other). These triggers compelled the individual to turn inward to recreate some aspect of self.

The responses to the triggers changed over time. In the later Stages, Composting and Maintaining Self, the individual took the initiative to create situations to promote growth. This was a contrast to the initial stage of Focusing On Self, where the individual was trying to

cope and make sense of the changes. This distinction is similar to Robertson's (1988) reference to "unplanned novelty" and "planned novelty" (p. 83). By mobilizing resources, the individual becomes involved in proactivity as opposed to reactivity (Robertson, 1988). Examples of reactivity were evident in the individuals' descriptions of their initial responses to experiences of physical abuse in relationships, having a child leave home unexpectedly, and the termination of a significant relationship, where getting through and surviving these circumstances seemed to be the main concern.

In the proactive position, the individuals described the importance of taking responsibility to cultivate meaning in life, acquire a sense of satisfaction, attain identified goals, and take the necessary steps to improve themselves. Taking these initiatives required motivation and a willingness to risk. The notion of change and preparation for change are central to the journal writing process. The triggers also included normal developmental changes which were qualitatively different from the previously crisis events. Examples of these triggers included the birth of a child or a career change.

In noting the link between some kind of trigger event (Context of Change) and personal growth/development, Robertson (1988) notes that "any new situation or novel experience is experienced in the context of one's accepted

ways of constructing the world and of interacting in it" (p. 75). This idea is akin to the symbolic interactionist perspective, which asserts that the meaning of events for individuals arises out of interaction, and that the actor also interacts with oneself to create meaning. However, at the point at which certain actions are no longer effective, a rethinking, a search, begins for a better order of action. It is from this dynamic that novelty can act as a springboard for growth. Novelty requires that "we add something to ourselves; it demands that we learn something new" (Robertson, 1988, p. 78).

In this study it was evident that experiential learning served as an important foundation for development. The journal writing process reflects how and what an individual is learning through living. The individual explores options for self-expression and problem-solving, engages in strategies such as time-shifting and creative self-expression, and takes action to facilitate change.

The patterning of the journal writing process is reflected in the model of experiential learning outlined by Kolb (1984). He describes the learning process in terms of a dimension in which the learning is acquired concretely or abstractly, and a second dimension in which learning is transformed in order to make it one's own, either reflectively or actively. Robertson (1988) summarizes the model as follows:

> a complete learning cycle involves the person having concrete experiences, reflecting on these experiences, formulating abstract generalizations about them, and experimenting to explore the validity and implications of the generalizations (p. 51).

The journal writing process is about self-learning. The process of learning that is encountered by the writers is cumulative and continuous. This finding is reflected in Kolb's (1984) comments, paraphrased in the following: (a) knowledge is a transformation process of being continuously created and recreated; (b) learning is grounded in experience; and (c) learning encompasses all life stages and occurs in all settings. Even when the use of the journal becomes somewhat passe, the individual continues to explore. Robertson (1988) notes that knowledge is continuously derived from and tested out in experiences. He elaborates by quoting Dewey (1935):

> ..the principle of continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after...As an individual passes from one situation to another, his world, his environment, expands or contracts...What he has learned in the way of knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the situations which follow. The process goes on as long as life and learning continue. (pp. 35, 44)

The findings that journal writing provided a useful tool and manifested the process and product of development are supported by the literature from clinical/psychotherapeutic contexts. However, such favorable findings do run contrary to the recent

conclusions by Murray, Lamnin & Carver (1989). In their study to understand emotional change, brief psychotherapy was compared with written expression about stressful life events and a control condition of writing about trivial events. The researchers noted that without a therapist in the written expression condition of the study, negative emotions accelerated after written expression. They concluded that the self-generated changes were insufficient to produce basic attitude change or a shift to positive feelings.

Experiential learning differs from the more traditional theoretical models of learning. Colaizzi (1978) notes that the traditional approach to learning is concerned with performance data, that is, the evidence that learning has occurred. By focusing on the need for measurement and quantification in understanding more about learning, there is a neglect of the "investigation of the phenomenon of learning" (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 120). As the writing process marks the learning process, the writing process also reflects the learning phenomenon. Genuine learning, which is more likely to be reflected in the writing process, is not a focus of investigation by traditional learning models. In describing genuine learning, Colaizzi, (1978) highlights the following characteristics:

1. Genuine learning radically re-structures our world-views of something. Somehow our inter-personal conduct or our attitudes toward our emotional life or our regard for status or our

evaluation of ambition and success or our experience of the meaning of the future, or some such vital area of our existence, is essentially modified; somehow, we no longer see it in the same light.

2. Genuine learning is a temporal unfolding which can never be absolutely completed.
3. It makes sense for something in our lives, it provides existential meaning and we affirm it; we believe it to be the true and best way of seeing or interpreting or doing or experiencing something: "a learner believes what he has learned to be true". (pp. 128-129)

A Stage Model of Journal Writing

The use of the grounded theory method resulted in the discovery of Recreating Self as the Basic Social psychological process. The characteristics of this stage model bears some resemblances to other stage models, such as experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), counselling (Hansen, Stevic & Warner, 1986), and creativity (Wallas, 1926). However, these similarities need to be qualified.

One of the important contributions of this study was the researcher's finding that the psychological processes of journal writing could be explained and conceptualized in terms of generalized stages. A stage model may be viewed as an heuristic tool to facilitate an understanding of the experience of journal writing and to reflect on possibilities for change.

The title for each stage was taken from the name of some human function or characteristic such as focusing, exploring, and maintaining. However, it is important to bear in mind that there is no function that arises in one

stage and disappears in the next. For example, the activity of Focusing On Self may also be experienced in other stages. Even though the stage names describe characteristics that are predominant at that stage, it is the total pattern that defines the stage.

The second feature is non-linearity. This means that the stages do not progress in a constant, consecutive and lineal manner. Some individuals learned, or simply preferred to go through some stages more quickly than others. Others remained at a certain stage for a longer period of time, depending on the issue, the degree of readiness to explore the issue, or the resources available.

In certain situations, an individual may return to a previous stage. A trigger may activate the need or desire to reenter a stage. For example, one individual began to take steps towards self-assertion (Stage 3) and encountered rejection. The dissonance and confusion resulted (Stage 1) in her reconsideration of the desired changes and consideration of other options (Stage 2). Glaser (1978) notes that the transition from one stage to another is ordinarily contingent upon one or more things happening. This contingency is described as follows:

> critical juncture - a period of time between stages when the occurrence or non-occurrence of a particular critical event will determine whether a new stage is entered (a stage is skipped, one of several possible stages is entered, etc.) or the previous stage is maintained. (p. 99)

The third characteristic of this model is the finding that the stages are ordered and sequential, while allowing for cyclical, recursive and overlapping characteristics. There is a general cumulative effect which is taking place. The experience of a significant life transition in the framework of the proposed model provides a blueprint for changes in the future. This cumulative effect is linked to experiential learning in the sense that learning and coping skills are acquired over time. This enables the individual to discern what options to explore, what resources to utilize, and what criteria will be used to evaluate the resolution.

The fourth characteristic is the tendency for the individual to be at various stages depending on the issue(s) at hand and the context. Behavior takes place in context. The context or contexts give meaning to the behavior. When responding to behavior and events, individuals consider the meaning and evaluation that they assign to them. Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson (1967) state that:

> A phenomenon remains unexplainable as long as the range of observations is not wide enough to include the context in which the phenomenon occurs. (p. 20)

The fifth aspect of the journal writing model is the finding that development is a continuous progression, a process that does not have an endpoint. Just as the impact of events is gradual and cumulative (Progoff, 1988), so is

the process of development. As noted in Stage Four, however, the need for the journal may be outgrown, and journal writing may even inhibit personal growth if used as an end in itself.

In conceptualizing the journal writing process as a stage theory, caution needs to be taken. First, it is important to recognize the presence of generalized stages as well as individual idiosyncrasies. Secondly, care needs to be taken to avoid oversimplifying the processes involved in journal writing by adhering rigidly to the more traditional view of stage theories as a natural, invariable and inevitable sequence of stages.

Recreating Self

The concept of recreating self was formulated as the Basic Social Process. This process varied in magnitude, intensity, and nature both within individuals and between individuals. Recreating self is a concept that is supported by Progoff's (1975) reference to the active role of the journal in "reconstructing a life (p. 9), enabling one's life to "renew" itself (p. 11), and providing a way for the perspectives of one's life to "reshape" themselves (p. 115). New meanings, new perspectives and goals emerge (Progoff, 1975). Wheelis (1973) likens such changes to "self-transcendance", "adopting a new way of life", or "a conversion" (p. 105).

The participants articulated their experience of

recreating self as "rebirthing", "reparenting", comparing the "old self to the new self", building one's life as "standing up for oneself", "taking charge" of one's own life, and developing a "strong sense of self."

Recreating self also shares some commonality with the nature of recreating self in adult children of dysfunctional families (Napier, 1990) and with the feminist perspective on psychological healing (Laidlaw & Malmo, 1990). Napier (1990) refers to the importance of drawing on inner resources to "promote a healing, integrative journey of reclaiming the wounded child within from the past and recreating self in the present" (p. 14). Napier (1990) asserts that life experiences compel us to consider new information to create concepts and ideas about ourselves and our surroundings. New ways of living are initiated while ways that no longer serve a purpose are relinquished.

Parallels may also be drawn betwen Recreating self and Laidlaw and Malmo's (1990) examination of women's psychological health and the role of the feminist therapist in the healing process. In their view, the healing process is more than cumulative or cognitive; it is transformative. In effecting inner change, feelings are identified and expressed, destructive and unhealthy beliefs are reframed. The recreating of self involves recognizing past events and how they influence present feelings,

thoughts, and behaviors. Creative strategies facilitate the individual's journey towards reclaiming and healing the lost and damaged childhood self (Laidlaw & Malmo, 1990).

Role of Creativity

The theory of journal writing that involves recreating self can be viewed as an example of Rogers' (1959) theory of creativity which recognizes the creative potential of all individuals. The journal writer is engaged in making personal changes. Alternative means of self-expression are sought. The creative process for Rogers (1959) is "the emergence in action of a novel relational product, growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, people, or circumstances of his life on the other" (p. 71).

Creativity is not restricted to some particular content and may be expressed in numerous ways. The writer reflects the novelty that includes personal qualities in "interaction with the materials of experience" (Rogers, 1959, p. 71). Creativity may be found in a drawing, in a poem or short story, or in discovering new ways of relating. Similar creative actions are manifested in the journal writing process.

The journey of self-development in journal writing is also linked to creativity as described by Moustakas (1967) in the following:

> ...to experience life in one's own way, to perceive one's own person, to draw upon one's own resources and

> capacities. It means facing life directly and honestly; courageously searching for and discovering grief, joy, suffering, pain, struggle, conflict, and finally inner solitude. Only from the search into oneself can the creative emerge. (p. 137)

The journal writing model bears some resemblance to the theory of the creative process as advanced by Joseph Wallas (1926). The creative process can be characterized by four stages: preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification. In the analysis of the creative process, Arieti (1976) notes that Wallas' (1926) theory has been applied in every field of creativity and may be viewed as a process of working toward a solution for any problem. Parallels can easily be drawn between stages of creativity and the individuals' attempts to contend with dissatisfaction through journalling. The vital role of the imagination in creativity is underscored by Kierkegaard:

> Imagination is not one faculty on a par with others, but, if one would so speak, it is the faculty instar omnium (for all faculties). What feeling, knowledge, or will a man has depends in the last resort upon what imagination he has, that is to say, upon how these things are reflected. Imagination is the possibility of all reflection, and the intensity of this medium is the possibility of the intensity of the self (cited in Corsini, 1977, p. 360).

Finally, for those who engaged in some form of creative expression as a part or result of journal writing, there is a sense of recreation that follows. Recreation is defined as "refreshment of body and mind; diversion, amusement, or any pleasurable exercise of occupation" (Funk & Wagnall, 1976, p. 1126). Expressing oneself through the imagination

and creativity in the Composting Stage, for example, enables the individual to experience a sense of release, relief, and balance. The individual became more self-determining and experienced a sense of mastery. Furthermore, as the individual became more adept in articulating and taking action toward desired goals, greater confidence and self-assuredness resulted.

The Role of Self-Actualization

The theory of journal writing can be viewed in light of Maslow's (1987) hierarchy of needs and motivation towards self-actualization. The writer is not likely to be dominated by the physiological needs of hunger, thirst, and safety which are directly related to physical survival. Instead, there is an expressed need for belongingness and love. The individual experiences a sense of loneliness as well as alienation from the kind of relationships with people who understand and enhance the sense of belonging (Stage One).

The need for affiliation with others is reinforced by life events that become the writer's focus (e.g. separation, physical/emotional abuse,) and the emotions associated with such experiences (e.g. sadness, anger, rejection). In this sense, there is a similarity between the language used by the journal writers and Maslow's description of the hierarchy of needs that follow after physiological and safety needs. For example, Maslow (1987)

refers to deficiency motives (D-motives) as being influenced by the absence of things that are needed or the lack of fulfillment of the need for love and esteem belongingness. A person in such a need-state craves love as a hungry person craves food (Hergenhahn, 1984, p. 322).

Maslow (1987) also addresses the need for esteem that dominates one's life once the physiological, safety, and belongingness/love needs are met. He comments on the "need or desire for a stable, firmly based, usually high evaluation of themselves, for self-respect, or self-esteem and for the esteem of others" (Maslow, 1987, p. 21). These needs include the desire for strength, achievement, and adequacy, as well as, the desire for recognition, attention, and appreciation. The satisfaction of self-esteem needs results in a validation of one's worth. If these needs are thwarted or left unmet, a sense of inferiority, weakness and helplessness results.

As described earlier, the writer is also experiencing gaps in the fulfillment of esteem needs. The beginnings of journal writing may be viewed from the perspective of not having belongingness/love and esteem needs fulfilled. That journal writers are seeking to make sense of their issues (Stage III) and to make desired changes (Stage IV), is a testament of the individuals' aspiring toward a state of resolution.

The notion of self-actualization also has relevance to

the journal writing process. Although it is very unlikely for self-actualization to be attained fully, the participants were moving in the direction of the following:

> ongoing actualization of potentials, capacities and talents, as fulfillment of mission (or call, fate, destiny, or vocation), as a fuller knowledge of, and acceptance of, the person's own intrinsic nature, as an unceasing trend toward unity, integration or synergy within the person (Maslow, 1968, p. 25).

The participants spoke of needing/wanting to become more balanced in life, to broaden channels of self-expression and development (Stage IV) and become committed to learning and growing through their experiences.

Recreating self is also linked with self-transcendance as defined by Frankl (1984) in the following:

> ..being human always points and is directed, to something, or someone, other than oneself- be it a meaning to fulfill or another human being to encounter. The more one forgets himself- by giving himself to a cause to serve or another person to love- the more human he is and the more he actualizes himself...self-actualization is possible only as a side effect of self-transcendance. (p. 133)

The specific nature of these needs varied among individuals. One individual wanted to become more honest in relationships while another experienced the need to express creativity through other means such as drama or writing short stories. The journal writers noted their growing awareness and ability to chart their growth and identify their needs. In so doing, they became aware of the many changes that were occurring in their lives. This

is consistent with Maslow's (1987) reference to self-actualizing creativeness which shows itself in the ordinary affairs of life.

The journal writer's experience of tension, whether it is a trigger for journal writing or a consequence of making changes, reflects the search for meaning as expressed by Frankl (1984). This striving constitutes the primary motivational force in an individual. The term, "noo-dynamics" implies that the search for meaning may arouse tension and that this tension is "an indispensable prerequisite of mental health" (Frankl, 1984, p. 126). Mental health, then, is contingent on some tension- the tension between what the individual has achieved and what still remains to be accomplished. Although the journal, friends, groups, and courses may help channel and give form to this search, in the end, the responsibility and initiative lies within the individual. Each person is "questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by answering for his own life; to life he can only respond by being responsible" (Frankl, 1984, 131).

The Counselling Process

The theory of journal writing describes the process of cultivating a deeper relationship with oneself. This process of journal writing is akin to the developmental stages of the counselling process as outlined by Hansen, Stevic & Warner (1986):

1. initiating counselling and establishing a relationship
2. exploration of self
3. deeper exploration
4. working through

During the initial stage of Focusing on Self, the individual has experienced change and is reacting to the events that have occurred. There is a search for meaning and understanding. The characteristics of Stage One can also be seen in the initial stages of counselling.

From a counselling perspective, clients are people in quest - a quest that arises from dissatisfaction. Counselling involves a dialogue between two individuals while journal writing involves interaction with oneself. In this way, the two are fundamentally different. Nevertheless, this stage corresponds with the first phase of counselling which is the phase of initiating counselling and establishing a relationship.

The second stage of the journal writing process is characterized by the Exploring of Options. There is an appraisal and evaluation of emotions and self-concept. Similarly, the second phase of the counselling process (Exploration of Self) involves obtaining a "clearer and more complete delineation of various aspects of the client's self-concept and situation (Hansen, Stevic & Warner, 1986). Just as the journal is viewed by the

individual as a safe and non-threatening place to explore, counselling commences when there is an understanding and ability on the counsellor's part to provide a safe environment for the client.

The Composting stage of journal writing involves the working through of emotions and experiences. Attempts are made to deal with the past, present, or move ahead to the future. There is a turning over of experiences in the mind and on paper. In the counselling process, strategies are taken to promote some resolution of the issue. Several ingredients are necessary, including insight and self-understanding (Hansen, Stevic & Warner, 1986). Like the Composting Stage, the working-through phase requires that understanding be put into action. If action is not implemented, change is less likely to occur.

The stage of Maintaining Self in journal writing implies that the individual has reached a point of continuing with the changes. The journal is not sought after as an unyielding need. The individual is able to discern how development will continue to be manifest. The need for the journal may be outgrown and other options are considered. This stage corresponds to the fourth phase of the counselling process, termination, which involves an assessment of readiness to end counselling, consolidate learning, maximize the client's "transfer of learning", and increase self-reliance and confidence in maintaining the

changes (Hansen, Stevic & Warner, 1986, p. 368). Wheelis (1973) provides a metaphor of the farmer which illustrates the interplay between contemplation and action:

> A farmer must know the fence which bounds his land but need not spend his life standing there, looking out, beating his fists on the rails; better he till the soil, think of what to grow, where to plant the fruit trees. However small the area of freedom, attention and devotion may expand it to occupy the whole of life. (p. 31)

Parallels exist between the processes of journal writing and counselling in terms of the notion of change. In journal writing and counselling, the individual, not the journal or the therapist, is the focus of initiating and sustaining change. As Wheelis (1973) states:

> The responsibility lies with him, originates with him, remains with him to the end...we are no more the product of our therapists than of our genes; we create ourselves. The sequence is suffering, insight, will, action, change. The one who suffers, who wants to change, must bear responsibility all the way. (p. 102)

The journal writing process, like the counselling process, is not without its limitations. It is possible to become dependant on the journal as well as the counselling process. Burton (1965) cautions against using the journal writing process as a defense thereby allowing introspection rather than integrative action to take place. Self-absorption at the expense of relating to others is a potential downfall of both processes.

To hope in a final cure through journal writing or counselling is to underestimate the challenge that change

so often involves. It is not possible to eradicate the reality of the past despite the attempt to review and relive the past and to engage in interpretation and re-interpretation. The presence of a process means that developing or modifying experience must "fit in with and grow out of what has gone before- it must be organic" as people grow from "one position to the next, they cannot be switched" (Smail, 1987, p. 89).

Rennie, Phillips & Quartaro (1988) have identified several issues related to this approach.

Threats to Credibility

Subjectivity. The grounded theory method has been criticized for its subjective nature. This subjectivity may be derived from the subjective nature of the research topic and from researcher-as-an-instrument (Field & Morse, 1985). However, the purpose of qualitative research lies not in determining objectively what actually occurred but rather to objectively report the perceptions of each of the participants in the setting (Field & Morse, 1985).

In qualitative research, the investigators acknowledge their biases by bracketing their assumptions in the form of memos (Glaser, 1978; Quartaro, 1986; Rennie, Phillips & Quartaro, 1988). Bracketing invokes the researcher's attempt to identify and record biases at each stage of the development of a grounded theory. This explicit acknowledgment of assumptions serves the purpose of

containing the influence of the researcher's biases.

The role of the researcher is crucial as the amount and quality of the data as well as the depth of the analysis is dependent upon the "researcher's sensitivity, perceptivity, informed value judgments, insight and knowledge" (Field & Morse, 1985, p. 115). In reference to her own research, Quartaro (1986) explains:

> As the analysis proceeds through successive levels of abstraction, however, the researcher's contribution becomes more difficult to separate from the emerging data. At this point, the investigation becomes a shaping influence on the developing investigation. More abstract categories develop according to the data but also according to the knowledge and experience of the researcher...The analysis is colored by the perspective of the specific researcher. However, it is unlikely that any grounded researcher would not have seen this pattern in the data and represented it in some way. At this level of analysis, the researcher influences the data, but the limiting factors for that influence are the data themselves. (pp. 20-21)

According to Rennie, Phillips & Quartaro (1988), subjectivity poses a problem in the context of the norm of total objectivity in the positivist tradition. This norm can inhibit the researcher's goal of identifying and disclosing personal assumptions. There is a fear that the scientific community may reject research efforts that are marked by the open disclosure of subjective factors. The norm of total objectivity in psychological research also places editorial constraints on the length of publications and hence limits the documentation of categories.

Verbal Reports As Data. The use of verbal reports as data in grounded theories is perceived as another threat to its intrinsic worth. This means that the internal processes of which participants are not aware are inaccessible to grounded researchers (Rennie, Phillips & Quartaro, 1988). Investigators may be misled by the participants who misrepresent the concerns that they are aware of. In other words, how does the researcher know if the informant is telling the truth? Dean & Whyte (1969) list several aids in detecting distortion: checking for implausibility, corroborating data through repeated interviews, and comparing an informant's account with the accounts given by other informants. Checks on credibility enable the data to be repeatedly compared and contrasted. Gradually any distortions or falsehoods given will be exposed (Hutchinson, 1986). Furthermore, the constant comparative method can be used to show that different participants say the same thing (Rennie, Phillips & Quartaro, 1988). The cross-checking of accounts by different informants provides some indication about whether or not further questions are warranted (Dean & Whyte, 1969).

Cotton (1980) warns against making the hasty assumption that verbal reports are inaccurate, as valuable data may be dismissed. Following an examination of studies in verbal reports, Ericsson & Simon (1980) contend that when verbal

reports are obtained with care and interpreted with full understanding of the circumstances under which they were obtained, they provide a valuable and reliable source of information about processes that are attended to and registered in short-term memory. Morris (1981) attests that verbal reports draw only on conscious material, and that what is conscious is intentionality.

Generalizability. The grounded theorist is often faced with the question: "If I were to repeat this study, would I find or generate the same results, that is, theory?" (Hutchinson, 1986, p. 13). The response to the question of exact replication is "no". Grounded theory process depends on the interaction that takes place between the data and the researcher's skill, creativity, resources,time, and ability to analyze. It is similarly unlikely that two researchers would arrive at the same theory. Berger & Kellner (1981) note that, "The social location, the psychological constitution and the cognitive peculiarities of an interpreter are inevitably involved in the act of interpretation, and all of them will affect the interpretation" (p. 48).

With regards to theory that pertains to a social/psychological phenomenon, reproducibility is unlikely as it is improbable that new situations or other situations whose conditions exactly match those of the original study would be found. However, a similar

theoretical explanation about a particular phenomenon should be obtained by another researcher given the same theoretical perspective of the original researcher, adherence to the same general rules for gathering and analyzing data, and a similar set of conditions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Theoretical Generalizability. Another question of interest is, "If I apply this theory to a similar situation, will it work, that is, allow me to interpret, understand, and predict phenomenon?" (Hutchinson, 1986, p. 13). The answer to this question is "yes". While a substantive theory can be regarded as valid only for the population studied, a quality theory will identify a basic social process that is also relevant to people in general. As stated by Bigus, Hadden & Glaser (1982), the main concern of BSP sociology is first with the generic and then with the substantive. The researcher generalizes a substantive BSP to a generic BSP. A BSP theory is not a factual description. It is a theory, thus, it is theoretically generalizable to those situations that gave rise to specific sets of action/interaction pertaining to a phenomenon and the resulting consequences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

That grounded theory research is conducted on a small number of selected individuals is not problematic since the purpose is to produce an accurate rendition of a certain

aspect of the phenomenon being studied and to develop a reality-based theory. The emphasis is on depth and intimacy or "thick description" with the phenomenon. One aims for working hypotheses that relate to a particular context, rather than generalizations that will hold true in all times and in all places (Geertz, 1973). The object is not to verify the theory generated beyond the verification yielded by the saturation of categories. Additional verification is left to subsequent studies (Rennie, Philips & Quartaro, 1988).

Delimitations

The first delimitation to the study was the criteria of the sample. Only individuals who were engaged in journal writing at the time of the study were included. Second, the writers were the primary focus of the study; no attempts were made to interview significant others, such as family members. The third delimitation was the research choice of the grounded theory method. Fourth, data were obtained from interviewing procedures only, and not other procedures, such as directly accessing the participants' journals.

Criteria For Evaluating A Substantive Theory

Glaser & Strauss (1967) describe the significant criteria for the evaluation of a quality grounded theory.

Fit. This term refers to how closely the theory relates to the realities of the substantive area (journal

writing). A quality theory has categories that are applicable to and indicated by the data under study. In other words, the categories are not forced upon the data.

The process of recreating self emerged from the participants' narratives as an important theme in their experience. The theory of journal writing process was presented to the primary informants. They made comments on how the journal writing process made sense in terms of their experiences. The theory of journal writing was also discussed with numerous secondary informants (e.g. counsellors, individuals involved in counselling, individuals not receiving counselling, and individuals who previously kept a journal). The concepts were found to be relevant to their experiences as well.

Work. A quality theory explains the major behavioral and interactional variations of the substantive area. The theory can explain what happened and predict what will happen under certain conditions. In order for the theory to be effective, the categories must fit the data. The theory must also address the main theme of what is going on in the process being studied. In this study, the theory about journal writers predicts that if they cannot recreate aspects of their lives (e.g., emotionally, socially), they will encounter increasing self-dissatisfaction.

Relevance. A theory must be meaningful and usable in the substantive area. A useful theory assists in

understanding and analyzing situations. Hutchinson (1986) notes that a quality theory should possess "relevance related to the core variable and its ability to explain the ongoing social processes in the action scene" (p. 127). The findings of this study were presented at a local conference on qualitative research in health areas, held in February, 1991. Several professionals from the fields of nursing and psychology commented that the theory and related concepts made a contribution to their clinical understanding.

Modifiability. A quality theory must be able to capture the nonstatic, fluctuating nature of social life. This flexibility is needed so that changing situations can be accommodated. It is possible that the process of recreating self applies to other circumstances where individuals contend with self-dissatisfaction. The substantive codes that are presented in this study are specific to those situations where individuals are contending with dissatisfaction. However, the theoretical codes that reflect the links between the substantive codes would apply to other situations involving dissatisfaction. While the events or issues could change, the basic process of recreating self remains intact.

Implications For Counselling

The theory of recreating self through journal writing has potential applicability in several ways. First, an awareness of a process involving general stages can

facilitate the counselling process. Some clients are involved in writing prior to initiating counselling. It may be useful to explore how the individual has conceptualized and expressed the issue(s). This information may shed light on where the client may be situated with respect to the stages of the journal writing theory, or an individual may need time to turn inward. Sensitivity on the part of the counsellor may be helpful in assisting movement from one stage to another. By being attuned to the stages involved in the process, the counsellor may be less puzzled if the client seems to be losing interest in using the journal. Counsellors need to bear in mind the individuality of the clients and the ways in which clients understand and respond to experiences. By acknowledging a process in journal writing, the counsellor and client are better able to contend with the "dry periods" of not writing. The pain may be too difficult to face directly and immediately, or a resolution of the issue may have been reached.

Second, journal writers, counsellors, and workshop leaders could benefit from knowing more about the non-lineal and cyclical nature of journal writing. At any given time, the individual is likely to be experiencing a number of changes that involve various stages of the journal writing process. Counsellors and journal workshop leaders can play a part in educating writers of these

notions and their implications.

Third, knowledge of the theory holds potential for assisting the client to use journal writing as a medium for expressing personal growth and creativity. Within the counselling context, knowledge of this aspect of journal writing may be helpful at the point of termination and follow-up. The client could be encouraged to consider journal writing as a means of problem-solving, sustaining growth, and facilitating creative expression as an independent resource.

Fourth, the application of this theory involves making a distinction between writing pages of repetition and using the journal to move through personal issues. Journal writing is not necessarily effective for problem-solving and self-development. Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch (1974) note that people tend to apply a certain solution to a problem because they believe the solution will work. If the solution is not successful, people then attribute blame to the application of the solution, rather than to the solution itself. In a counselling context, the counsellor needs to identify if a change of change (second order change) is warranted (Bateson, 1972; Watzlawick et al., 1974).

An understanding of the theory may provide some guidelines in terms of the change process. It is possible to guard against a client's disengagement from the

counsellor and social contacts through self-analysis and introspection in writing. Progoff (1963) cautions against looking behind reality for causes and events in the following:

> when the person begins to think of himself in the light of pathology his image grows dim. The thoughts that he projects are thoughts of weakness and they refer to the difficulties experienced along the road of development rather than to the unfolding essence of the process as a whole. (p. 60)

If this seems to be occurring, the counsellor might explore the possibility of balancing the personal and the interpersonal dimensions of relating, as one possible strategy.

At the preventive level, the journal writing theory could be used for psychoeducational purposes and presented to the general public, journal writing workshops, and clients in counselling. Loneliness, like other emotions that are perceived negatively, represents a condition that is typical of the initial stages of journal writing and of the later stages such as Composting. Individuals who are aware of the emotions involved in the writing process may be less fearful of engaging in this activity as a means for self-exploration. This understanding can, in turn, lessen inhibitions about seeking help and lessen fears of future change.

Suggestions For Future Research

The theory of journal writing may be used as a springboard for future studies. Information could be obtained about the process of recreating self from other writing groups such as published journal writers, autobiographers, and poets. By examining their process, an understanding of the role of creativity and creative expression in self-development would be obtained.

The theory of journal writing could be used to study individuals who at one time wrote in a journal but no longer regard themselves as journal writers. The research model could examine individuals who have encountered change, such as chronic illness, separation, abortion, or unemployment, or even focus on factors that promote addiction to writing. Other research might involve testing the theory. This might involve a quantitative investigation to generate hypotheses, and test the viability and effectiveness of the theory.

Conclusion

In this study, a theory of journal writing that is grounded in data was discovered. This theory is based on a basic social psychological process, that of Recreating Self. Recreating Self represents the core around which the theory was integrated. A new explanation of journal writing is made possible by looking for process. This organizing framework provides a fresh perspective on

journal writing while incorporating some of the aspects of journal writing already known.

In conclusion, this theory reflects the potential for recreating self that is possible in the journey of self-exploration and personal growth. The following story is a testament to the new learning, discoveries, and experiences of creation, renewal, and rebirth that are possible for those who embark on this search. Moustakas (1967) tells this story:

> In the Upanishads there is a story about Yajnavalkya, the sage at the king's court. The king asked him one day, "By what light do human beings go out, do their work and return?" The sage answered, "By the light of the sun." The king then asked, "But when the light of the sun is extinguished, by what light do human beings go out, do their work and return?" The sage said, "By the light of the moon." And so question and answer went on. When the moon is extinguished, man works by the light of the stars; when they are quenched, by the light of the fire. And when the light of the fire itself is put out, the king asked, "By what light then can they do their work and still live?" The sage replied: "By the light of the self." (p. 124)

Epilogue

In devoting my time and energy to the journey of researching the area of journal writing, I have been effected both as researcher and counsellor.

(A) Researcher: Embarking on this research has taught me many important lessons. As I reflect upon what I have learned, many things come to mind. First of all, I have learned about the importance of respecting my own internal process as a researcher--that is, the process of trusting

myself as a researcher in grounded theory. I have also recognized the importance of trusting the method itself, that it does work and it does bear fruit.

As I reflect upon the entire research process, several points come to mind. My own journal consisted of memos about my involvement as a researcher in the grounded theory method. The journal captured assumptions and biases that I had as well as my awareness of new ideas and insights. At various points during the research, I took time to re-read the journal entries. I noted the cyclical and recursive nature of my development as a researcher. I became particularly aware of how I was influenced by the research and also how the research influenced me. For example, by memoing about ideas and hunches during the data collection process, I experienced the freedom to set them aside and attend to the analysis. It was interesting and exciting to find the hunches that were borne out in the emerging analysis.

The volume of data amassed while learning how this method worked involved patience and permission to let myself wait for ideas to come. This sometimes meant letting go of ideas and concepts that initially sounded appealing and catchy but did not have a place of fit in the theory. During the initial data collection stage, my tendency was to become overwhelmed with the volumes of data from the interview transcripts and from the analysis of the

data. In many ways, my research journal and personal reflections reflected a process that paralleled the stages of the journal writing theory .

In the beginning phase of the research, there was a Focusing On Self as I reflected upon my resources as researcher and interviewer. There was a period of confusion, anxiety, and frustration as I encountered the "crisis of confidence" about doing research that would result in a significant contribution. There was a Focusing On Self in terms of where I, as the researcher would find interested participants to volunteer in this study and how I would go about commencing the research.

As the research proceeded, I found myself in the stage of Exploring Options. This stage involved possibilities of who I could interview and who I could not, when to collect more data, when to stop collecting data, when to transcribe the interviews and when to simply take time away to reflect or play. I found myself exploring what possibilities existed in terms of dealing with the periods of confusion or anxiety I encountered. Would it be helpful to talk with a fellow researcher also in the research process? Was this the time to consult with committee members or supervisors? What part does the peer group have? I discovered at times, it was most beneficial to engage in dialogue with those individuals. At other times, it was necessary for me to reflect and to be alone. The Composting stage was my

sorting out and making sense phase in a number of ways. What were my own biases and assumptions about journal writing? I realized the importance of keeping myself separate from the participants. This was also the stage during which I dealt with emotions that accompanied each aspect of the research and had to prioritize them in terms of what most needed attention. There were times of sheer excitement of having had an interview which I regarded as particularly insightful and illuminating. At other times, it was necessary to deal with the frustration of having permitted the counsellor in me rather than the researcher guide the interview.

The last stage of Maintaining Self involved reaching points during the research where I was no longer sensing the intense need for feedback and direction from the peer group. At one point, I experienced the desire and confidence to continue working independently. There was a growing confidence about the research process itself. Over time, I witnessed progress in the findings as well as an adeptness on my part in interviewing, analyzing data, and developing categories, stages, and a basic social process in journal writing. I encountered less of a need to rely on the how-to books for conducting research.

(B) Counsellor: As a counsellor, I had not utilized journal writing as a tool in my work with clients prior to this study. In conducting this study, I have come to a

deeper appreciation of its usefulness and application not only in problem-solving but also in cultivating one's creative potentials, enabling self-expression, and paving a path for personal growth. The development of a process in journal writing has been an exciting one for me as it has opened the door to a potentially useful and creative way of assisting clients, counsellors, and researchers in charting their personal and professional growth. Parallels may be drawn between the journal writing process and the processes involved in counselling and creativity, thus facilitating broader applications of the journal. The journal may be as useful for growth-oriented and recreational purposes as it is for problem-solving.

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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
Department of Educational Psychology

JOURNAL WRITING RESEARCH PROJECT

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Title: An investigation of the psychological processes involved in the experience of journal writing.

Investigator: Judy H. F. Chew, M.S.W., Ph.d Candidate (phone: 492-5245).

The purpose of this research project is to better understand the experience of journal writing. In conducting this research, at least two (2) interviews per person of approximately one hour each, will be held. During these interviews, you will have the opportunity to discuss your experience of journal writing. These interviews will be audiotaped. To ensure anonymity, the tapes and their transcripts will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Furthermore, the tapes and transcripts will be catalogued by an identification number, not by the participant's name. During one of the interviews, you will have the opportunity to comment on the investigator's interpretation of the information gained from your participation.

The final research report, including anonymous quotations, will take the form of a Doctoral Dissertation.

Although there may be no direct benefits to you, the participant in the study, the research findings may provide helping professionals with a broader knowledge base of the usefulness of journal writing following the completion of the study.

Journal Writing Research Project
Informed Consent (cont'd)

I, _____ (print name), voluntarily consent to participate in the above named project with Judy Chew, a graduate student in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Alberta.

I understand that the risks to me resulting from my participation in this research are assumed to be low. The potential benefits of this research to me may include increased awareness and knowledge (e.g. factors that may contribute or inhibit journal writing). However, I recognize that there are potential risks involved when discussing personal issues (e.g. feelings of sadness, or discomfort when remembering a painful life experience).

I understand that I am free to deny any answer to specific questions during the interviews. I also understand that I may withdraw my consent and terminate my participation at any time without penalty. I have been given the opportunity to ask whatever questions I deem helpful, and these questions have been answered satisfactorily.

I hereby give permission to be interviewed, and for these interviews to be audiotape recorded with the understanding that at the completion of the research project, the tapes will be erased. I understand that the information given by me will be used solely for research purposes and may be published in the form of a thesis or otherwise, but that my name will not be associated with the research.

SIGNED.

Participant _____

Witness _____

Researcher _____

Date _____